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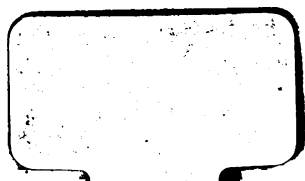
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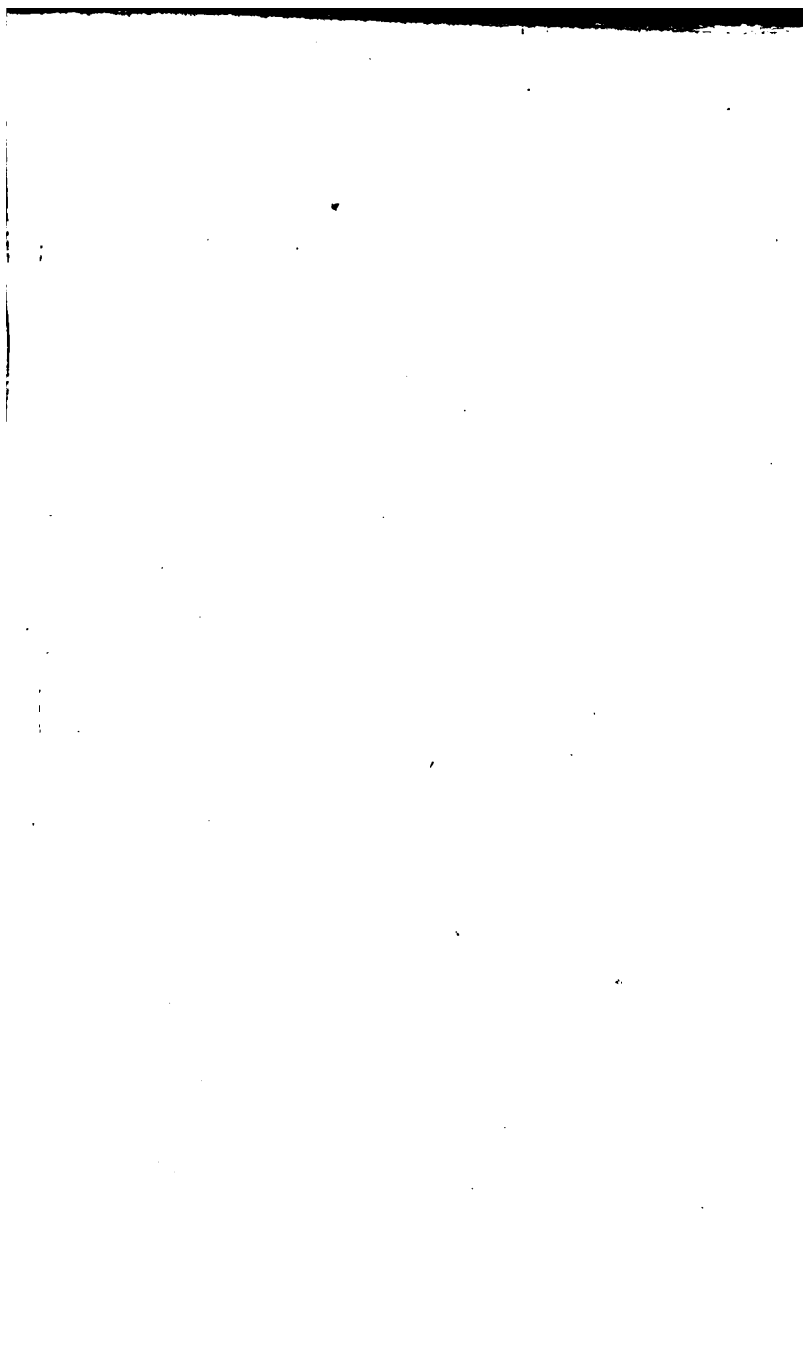
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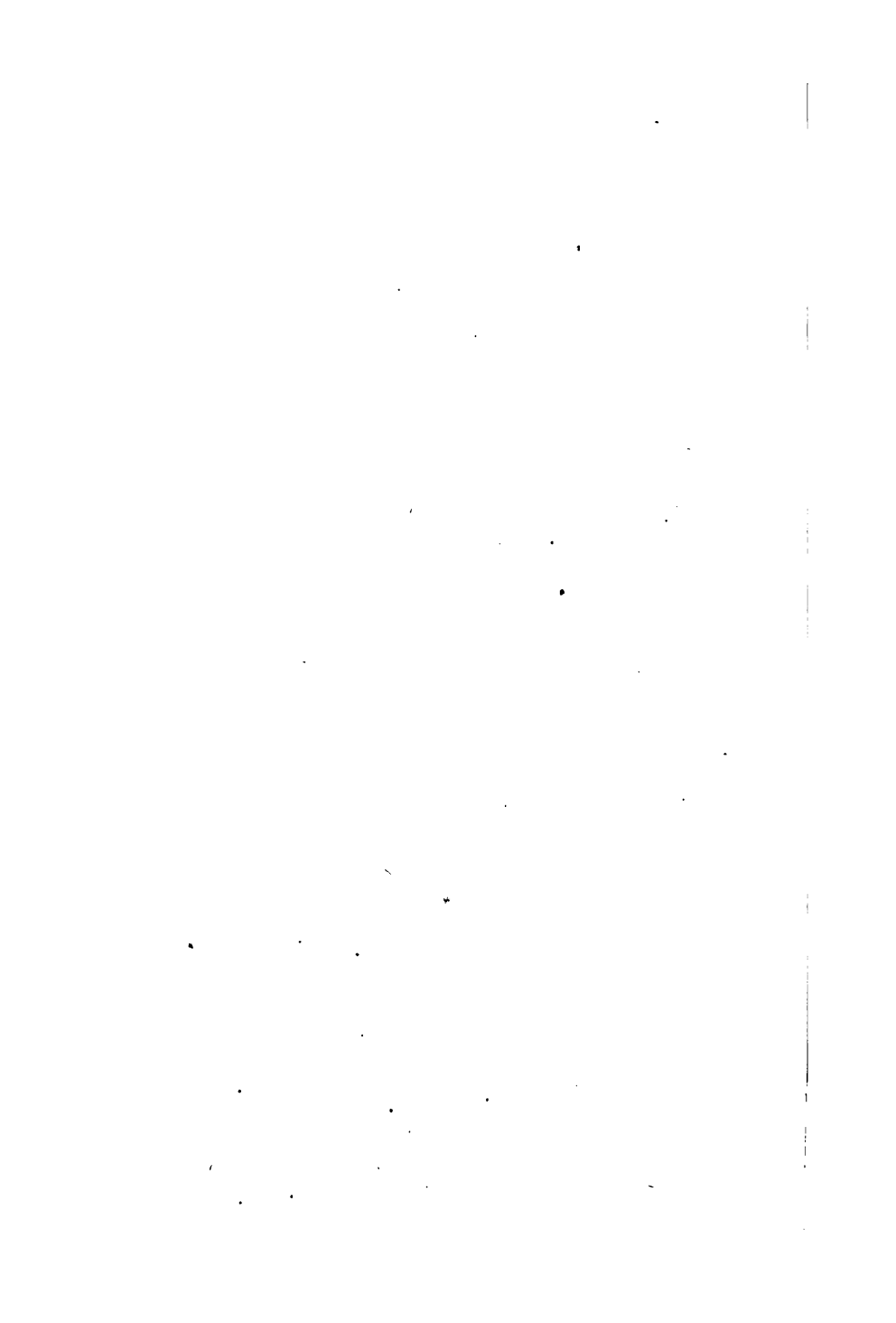
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HOME INFLUENCE;

A Tale

FOR

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.

BY

GRACE AGUILAR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

R. GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCLXVII.

C. AND J. ADLARD, PRINTERS, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.



TO

MRS. HERBERT TOWNSHEND BOWEN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Independent of the personal feelings which urged the dedication of these unpretending volumes to you, I know few to whom a story illustrative of a mother's solemn responsibilities, intense anxiety to fulfil them, and deep sense of the Influence of Home could, with more justice, be tendered. Simple as is the actual narrative, the sentiments it seeks to illustrate, are so associated with you,—have been so strengthened from the happy hours of unrestrained intercourse I have enjoyed with you—that, though I ought, perhaps, to have waited until I could have offered a work of far superior merit to a mind like yours, I felt as if no story of mine could more completely belong to you. Will you, then, pardon the *unintentional* errors which I fear you, as an earnest Protestant, *may* discern, and accept this little work as a slight tribute of the warm affection and sincere esteem with which you have been so long regarded by

Your truly attached Friend,

GRACE AGUILAR.

PREFACE.

THE following story will, the author trusts, sufficiently illustrate its title to require but few words in the way of preface. She is only anxious to impress two facts on the minds of her readers. The one—that having been brought before the public principally as the author of Jewish works, and as an explainer of the Hebrew Faith, some Christian mothers might fear that the present Work has the same tendency, and hesitate to place it in the hands of their children. She, therefore, begs to assure them, that as a simple domestic story, the characters in which are all Christians, believing in and practising that religion, all *doctrinal* points have been most carefully avoided, the author seeking only to illustrate the spirit of true piety, and the virtues always designated as the Christian virtues thence proceeding. Her sole aim, with regard to Religion, has been to incite a train of serious and loving thoughts towards God and man, especially towards those with whom He has linked us in the precious ties of parent and child, brother and sister, master and pupil.

The second point she is desirous to bring forward, is her belief, that in childhood and youth the *spoken* sentiment is one of the safest guides to individual character; and that if, therefore, she have written more conversation than may appear absolutely necessary for the elucidation of "Home Influence," or the interest of the narrative, it is from no wish to be diffuse, but merely to illustrate her own belief. SENTIMENT is the vehicle of THOUGHT, and THOUGHT the origin of ACTION. Children and youth have very seldom the power to evince character by action, and scarcely if ever understand the mystery of thought; and therefore their unrestrained conversation may often greatly aid parents and teachers in acquiring a correct idea of their natural disposition, and in giving hints for the mode of education each may demand.

Leaving the beaten track of works written for the young, the author's aim has been to assist in the education of the HEART, believing that of infinitely greater importance than the mere instruction of the MIND, for the bright awakening of the latter, depends far more on the happy influences of the former than is generally supposed.

The *moral* of the following story the author acknowledges is addressed to mothers only, for on them so much of the responsibility of Home Influence devolves.

On them, more than on any other, depends the well-doing and happiness, or the error and grief, not of childhood alone, but of the far more dangerous period of youth. A preface is not the place to enter on their mission. The author's only wish is, to *aid* by the thoughts, which in some young mothers, anxious and eager to perform their office, her story *may* excite. To daughters also, she hopes it may not be found entirely useless, for on them rests so much of the happiness of home, in the simple thought of, and attention to, those little things which so bless and invigorate domestic life. Opportunities to evince the more striking virtues women may never have, but for the cultivation and performance of the lesser, they are called upon each day.

Should the story be deemed so far incomplete, as not sufficiently to illustrate the *fruits* of the Home Influence it narrates, the conclusion, in a separate story, shall willingly be given.

CLAPTON, *January*, 1847.



PART I.

THE SISTERS.

HOME INFLUENCE.

CHAPTER I.

A LAUNCH.—A PROMISE.—A NEW RELATION.

IN a very beautiful part of Wales, between the northern boundaries of Glamorgan and the south-eastern of Carmarthenshire, there stood, some twenty or thirty years ago, a small straggling village. Its locality was so completely concealed that the appearance of a gentleman's carriage, or in fact of any vehicle superior to a light spring-cart, was of such extremely rare occurrence as to be dated, in the annals of Llangwillan, as a remarkable event, providing the simple villagers with amusing wonderment for weeks.

The village was scattered over the side of a steep and rugged hill; and on the east, emerging from a thick hedge of yews and larches, peeped forth the picturesque old church, whose tin-coated spire glittering in the faintest sunshine removed all appearance of gloom from the thick trees, and seemed to whisper; whatever darkness lingered round, light was always shining there. The churchyard, which the yews and larches screened, was a complete natural garden, from the lowly cottage flowers, planted by loving hands over many a grassy grave, and so hallowed that not a

child would pluck them, however tempted by their luxuriance and beauty. A pretty cottage, whose white walls were covered with jasmine, roses, and honeysuckle, marked the humble residence of the village minister who, though in worldly rank only a poor curate, from his spiritual gifts deserved a much higher grade.

A gurgling stream ran leaping and sparkling over the craggy hill till it formed a deep wide bed for itself along the road leading to the nearest town, embanked on one side by a tall leafy hedge, and on the other by rich grass and meadow flowers. By the side of this stream groups of village children were continually found, sometimes reaching for some particular flower or insect, or floating pieces of wood with a twig stuck upright within them as tiny fleets; but this amusement had given place the last ten days to the greater excitement of watching the progress of a miniature frigate, the workmanship of a young lad who had only very lately become an inmate of the village. All had been at length completed, sails, ropes, and masts, with a degree of neatness and beauty, showing not only ingenuity but observation; and one lovely summer evening the ceremony of launching took place. For a few minutes she tottered and reeled amidst the tiny breakers, then suddenly regained her equilibrium and dashed gallantly along. A loud shout burst from the group, from all save the owner, a beautiful boy of some twelve years, who contented himself with raising his slight figure to its full height, and looking proudly and triumphantly round him. One glance would suffice to satisfy that his rank in life was far superior to that of his companions, and that he condescended from cir-

cumstances, not from choice, to mingle with them. So absorbed was the general attention that the very unusual sound of carriage-wheels was unremarked until close beside them, and then so astounding was the sight of a private carriage, and the coachman's very simple question if that road led to the village, that all hung back confused. The owner of the little vessel, however, answered proudly and briefly in the affirmative. "And can you direct me, my good boy," inquired a lady, looking from the window, and smiling kindly at the abashed group, "to the residence of Mrs. Fortescue, it is out of the village, is it not?"

"Mrs. Fortescue!" repeated the boy eagerly, and gladly, and his cap was off his head in a moment, and the bright sunshine streamed on a face of such remarkable beauty, and withal so familiar, that though the lady bent eagerly forward to address him, emotion so choked her voice that the lad was enabled to reply to her inquiry, and direct the coachman to the only inn of the village, and they had driven off before words returned.

The boy looked eagerly after them, then desiring one of his companions to meet the lady at the inn, and guide her to the cottage, caught up his little vessel, and darted off across some fields which led by a shorter cut to the same place.

It was a very humble dwelling, so surrounded by hills that their shadow always seemed to overhang it: yet within, the happy temper of a poor widow and her daughter kept up a perpetual sunshine. Three weeks previous to the evening we have mentioned, a lady and two children had arrived at Llangwillan, unable to proceed farther from the severe indisposition of the former. They were unattended, and the driver only knew that

their destination was Swansea; he believed they had been shipwrecked off Pembroke, and that the poor lady was very ill when she commenced her journey, but the curious inquiries of the villagers could elicit nothing more. Mr. Myrvin, with characteristic benevolence, devoted himself to ensuring, as far as he could, the comfort of the invalid; had her removed from the inn to Widow Morgan's cottage, confident that there she would at least be nursed with tenderness and care, and so near him as to permit his constant watchfulness. But a very few days too sadly convinced him, not only that her disease was mortal, but that his presence and gentle accents irritated instead of soothed. Ill-temper and self-will seemed to increase with the weakness, which every day rendered her longing to continue her journey more and more futile. It was some days before she could even be persuaded to write to the relative she was about to seek, so determined was she that she would get well; and when the letter was forwarded, and long before an answer could have been received, (for twenty years ago there were no railroads to carry on epistolary communication as now,) fretfulness and despondency increased physical suffering, by the determined conviction that she was abandoned, her children would be left uncared for. In vain Mr. Myrvin assured her of the impossibility yet to receive a reply, that the direction might not even have been distinct enough, for her memory had failed her in dictating it;—she knew she was deserted, she might have deserved it, but her Edward was innocent, and it was very hard on him. As self-will subsided in physical exhaustion, misery increased. A restless torturing remembrance seemed to have taken possession of her, which all the efforts of the earnest

clergyman were utterly ineffectual to remove. She would not listen to the peace he proffered, and so painfully did his gentle eloquence appear to irritate instead of calm, that he desisted, earnestly praying that her sister might answer the letter in person, and by removing anxiety prepare the mind for better thoughts.

One object alone had power to bring something like a smile to that altered, but still most beautiful, countenance, conquer even irritation, and still create intervals of pleasure—it was her son, the same beautiful boy we have already noticed, and whose likeness to herself was so extraordinary that it would have been almost too feminine a beauty, had it not been for the sparkling animated expression of every feature, and the manly self-possession which characterized his every movement. That he should be his mother's idol was not very surprising, for the indiscreet and lavish indulgence which had been his from his birth, had not yet had power to shake his doating fondness for his mother, or interfere with her happiness by the visible display of the faults which her weakness had engendered. Caressingly affectionate, open-hearted, generous, and ever making her his first object, perhaps even a more penetrating mother would have seen nothing to dread, but all to love. His uncontrolled passion at the slightest cross, his haughty pride and indomitable will towards all save her, but increased her affection. And when he was with her, which he was very often, considering that a sick close room would have been utterly repugnant to him had it not contained his mother, Mrs. Fortescue was actually happy. But it was a happiness only increasing her intensity of suffering when her son was absent. Hide it from herself as she might, the truth would press upon

her that she was dying, and her darling must be left to the care of relations indeed, but utter strangers to him, and unlikely to treat him as she had done. She knew that he had, what strict disciplinarians, as she chose to regard her sister and her husband, would term and treat as serious faults, while she felt them actually virtues; and agony for him in the dread of what he might be called upon to endure, would deluge her pillow with passionate tears, and shake her slight frame as with convulsion.

The day we have mentioned, Edward had been absent longer than usual, and towards evening Mrs. Fortescue awoke from a troubled sleep to brood over these thoughts, till they had produced their usual effect in tears and sobs, the more painful to witness from the increasing physical incapacity to struggle with them.

A little girl, between ten and eleven years old, was seated on a low wooden stool, half concealed by the coarse curtain of the bed, employed in sewing some bright gilt buttons on a blue jacket. It seemed hard work for those small delicate hands; but she did not look up from her task till roused by the too familiar sound of her mother's suffering, and then, as she raised her head, and flung back the heavy and somewhat disordered ringlets, the impulse seemed to be to spring up and try to soothe, but a mournful expression quickly succeeded, and she sat several minutes without moving. At length, as Mrs. Fortescue's sobs seemed almost to suffocate her, the child gently bent over her, saying, very timidly, "Dear mamma, shall I call Widow Morgan, or can I get anything for you?" and, without waiting for a reply, save the angry negative to the first question, she held a glass of water to her mother's lips and

bathed her forehead. After a few minutes Mrs. Fortescue revived sufficiently to inquire where Edward was.

"He has gone down to the stream to launch his little frigate, Mamma, and asked me to fasten these buttons on his jacket to make it look like a sailor's meanwhile; I do not think he will be very long now."

Mrs. Fortescue made no rejoinder, except to utter aloud those thoughts which had caused her previous paroxysm, and her little girl, after a very evident struggle with her own painful timidity, ventured to say:

"But why should you fear so much for Edward, dear Mamma? Everybody loves him and admires him, so I am sure my aunt and uncle will."

"Your aunt may for my sake, but she will not love or bear with his childish faults as I have done; and your uncle is such a harsh, stern man, that there is little hope for his forbearance with my poor Edward. And he is so frank and bold, he will not know how even to conceal his boyish errors, and he will be punished, and his fine spirit broken, and who will be there to shield and soothe him!"

"I may be able sometimes, Mamma, and indeed, indeed, I will whenever I can," replied her child, with affecting earnestness. "I love him so very very much, and I know he is so much better than I am, that it will be very easy to help him whenever I can."

"Will you promise me, Ellen, will you really promise me to shield him, and save him from harshness whenever it is in your power," exclaimed Mrs. Fortescue, so eagerly, that she half raised herself, and pressed Ellen to her with an appearance of affection so unusual, and a kiss so warm, that that moment never passed from the

child's mind, and the promise she gave was registered in her own heart with a solemnity and firmness of purpose little imagined by her mother, who when she demanded it, conceived neither its actual purport nor extent; she only felt relieved that Edward would have some one by him to love him and enable him to conceal his errors, if he should commit any.

Had she studied and known the character of Ellen as she did that of her son, that promise would perhaps never have been asked; nor would she so incautiously and mistakenly have laid so great a stress upon *concealment*, as the only sure means of guarding from blame. From her childhood Mrs. Fortescue had been a creature of passion and impulse, and maternity had unhappily not altered one tittle of her character. In what manner, or at what cost, Ellen might be enabled to keep that promise, never entered her mind. It had never been her wont, even in days of health, to examine or reflect, and present weakness permitted only the morbid indulgence of one exaggerated thought.

For several minutes she lay quite silent, and Ellen resumed her seat and work, her temples throbbing, she knew not why, and a vain longing to throw her arms round her mother's neck, and entreat her only for one more kiss, one other word of love; and the consciousness that she dared not, caused the hot tears to rush into her eyes, and almost blind her, but she would not let them fall, for she had learned long ago, that while Edward's tears only excited soothing and caresses, hers always called forth irritation and reproof.

"Joy, joy! Mother, darling!" exclaimed an eager voice some minutes afterwards, and Edward bounded into the room, and throwing himself by his mother's

side, kissed her pale cheek again and again. "Such joy! My ship sailed so beautifully, I quite longed for you to see it, and you will one day when you get well and strong again; and I know you will soon now, for I am sure aunt Emmeline will very soon come, and then, then, you will be so happy, and we shall all be happy again!"

Mrs. Fortescue pressed him closer and closer to her, returning his kisses with such passionate fondness, that tears mingled with them and fell upon his cheek.

"Don't cry, Mamma, dear! indeed, indeed, my aunt will soon come. Do you know I think I have seen her and spoken to her, too."

"Seen her, Edward? You mean you have dreamed about her, and so fancy you have seen her;" but the eager anxious look she fixed upon him evinced more hope than her words.

"No, no, Mamma; as we were watching my ship, a carriage passed us, and a lady spoke to me, and asked me the way to the cottage where you lived, and I am sure it is aunt Emmeline from her smile."

"It cannot be," murmured his mother, sadly; "unless—" and her countenance brightened. "Did she speak to you, Edward, as if she knew you, recognized you, from your likeness to me?"

"No, Mamma, there was no time, the carriage drove off again so quickly; but, hush! I am sure I hear her voice down stairs," and he sprang up from the bed and listened eagerly. "Yes, yes, I am right, and she is coming up; no, it is only Widow Morgan, but I am sure it is my aunt by your face," he added, impatiently, as Mrs. Morgan tried by signs to beg him to be more cautious, and not to agitate his mother. "Why don't

you let her come up?" and springing down the whole flight of stairs in two bounds, he rushed into the little parlour, caught hold of the lady's dress, and exclaimed, "You are my aunt, my own dear aunt; do come up to mamma, she has been wanting you so long, so very long, and you will make her well, dear aunt, will you not?"

"Oh, that I may indeed be allowed to do so, dear boy!" was the painfully agitated reply, and she hastened up the stairs.

But to Edward's grief and astonishment, so little was he conscious of his mother's exhausted state, the sight of his aunt, prepared in some measure as she was, seemed to bring increase of suffering instead of joy. There was a convulsive effort for speech, a passionate return of her sister's embrace, and she fainted. Edward in terror flung himself beside her, entreating her not to look so pale, but to wake and speak to him. Ellen, with a quickness and decision, which even at that moment caused her aunt to look at her with astonishment, applied the usual restoratives, evincing no unusual alarm, and a careless observer might have said, no feeling; but it was only a momentary thought which Mrs. Hamilton could give to Ellen, every feeling was engrossed in the deep emotion with which she gazed on the faded form and altered face of that still beloved though erring one; who, when she had last beheld her, thirteen years previous, was bright, buoyant, lovely as the boy beside them. Her voice, yet more than the proffered remedies, seemed to recall life, and after a brief interval the choking thought found words.

"My father! my father! Oh, Emmeline, I know that he is dead! My disobedience, my ingratitude for all his too indulgent love, killed him—I know it did. But

did he curse me, Emmeline? did all his love turn to wrath, as it ought to have done? did—”

“Dearest Eleanor,” replied Mrs. Hamilton, with earnest tenderness, “dismiss such painful thoughts at once; our poor father did feel your conduct deeply, but he forgave it, would have received your husband, caressed, loved you as before, had you but returned to him; and so loved you to the last moment, that your name was the last word upon his lips. But this is no subject for such youthful auditors,” she continued, interrupting herself, as she met Edward’s bright eyes fixed wonderingly upon her face, and noticed the excessive paleness of Ellen’s cheek. “You look weary, my love,” she said, kindly, drawing her niece to her, and affectionately kissing her. “Edward has made his own acquaintance with me, why did you not do so too? But go now into the garden for a little while, I am sure you want fresh air, and I will take your place as nurse meanwhile. Will you trust me?”

And the kind smile which accompanied her words gave Ellen courage to return her kiss, but she left the room without speaking. Edward required more persuasion; and the moment he was permitted he returned, seated himself on a stool at his aunt’s feet, laid his head on her lap, and remained for nearly an hour quite silent, watching with her the calm slumbers which had followed the agitating conversation between them. Mrs. Hamilton was irresistibly attracted towards him, and rather wondered that Ellen should stay away so long. She did not know that Edward had spent almost the whole of that day in the joyous sports natural to his age, and that it had been many weary days and nights since Ellen had quitted her mother’s room.

CHAPTER II.

GLIMPSES INTO A CHILD'S HEART.—A DEATHBED.

ON leaving the cottage, Ellen hastily traversed the little garden, and entered a narrow lane, leading to Mr. Myrvin's dwelling. Her little heart was swelling high within her, and the confinement she had endured, the constant control she exercised for fear she should add to her mother's irritation, combined with the extreme delicacy of natural constitution, had so weakened her, as to render the slightest exertion painful. She had been so often reproved as fretful and ill-tempered, whenever in tears, that she always checked and concealed them. She had been so frequently told that she did not know what affection was, that she was so inanimate and cold, that though she did not understand the actual meaning of the words, she believed she was different to any one else, and was unhappy without knowing why. Compared with her brother, she certainly was neither a pretty nor an engaging child. Weakly from her birth, her residence in India had increased constitutional delicacy, and while to a watchful eye the expression of her countenance denoted constant suffering, the heedless and superficial observer would condemn it as peevishness, and so unnatural to a young child, that nothing but confirmed ill-temper could have produced it. The soft beautifully-formed black eye was too large for her other features, and the sallowness

of her complexion, the heavy tresses of very dark hair, caused her to be remarked as a very plain child, which in reality she was not. Accustomed to hear beauty extolled above everything else, beholding it in her mother and brother, and imagining it was Edward's great beauty that always made him so beloved and petted, an evil-disposed child would have felt nothing but envy and dislike towards him. But Ellen felt neither. She loved him devotedly; but that any one could love her, now that the only one who ever had—her idolized father—was dead, she thought impossible.

Why her heart and temples beat so quickly as she left her mother's room—why the promise she had so lately made should so cling to her mind, that even her aunt's arrival could not remove it—why she felt so giddy and weak as to render walking painful, the poor child could not have told, but, unable at length to go farther, she sat down on a grassy bank, and believing herself quite alone, cried bitterly. Several minutes passed and she did not look up, till a well-known voice inquired:—

"Dear Ellen, what is the matter? What has happened to grieve you so to-day? won't you tell me?"

"Indeed, indeed, I do not know, dear Arthur; I only feel—feel—as if I had not so much strength as I had a few days ago—and, and I could not help crying."

"You are not well, Ellen," replied her companion, a fine lad of sixteen, and Mr. Myrvin's only son. "You are looking paler than I ever saw you before; let me call my father. You know he is always pleased when he sees you, and he hoped you would have been to us before to-day; come with me to him now."

"No, Arthur, indeed I cannot; he will think I have forgotten all he said to me the last time I saw him, and, indeed, I have not—but I—I do not know what is the matter with me to-day."

And, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, the tears would burst forth afresh; and Arthur, finding all his efforts at consolation ineffectual, contented himself with putting his arm round her and kissing them away. A few minutes afterwards his father appeared.

"In tears, my dear Ellen!" he said, kindly; "your mother is not worse, I hope?"

"I do not know, sir," replied the child, as well as her tears would permit; "she has been very ill just now, for her faint was longer than usual."

"Did anything particular occasion it?"

"I think it was seeing my aunt. Mamma was very much agitated before and afterwards."

"Mrs. Hamilton has arrived then! I am rejoiced to hear it," replied Mr. Myrvin, gladly. Then sitting down by Ellen, he took one of her hands in his, and said, kindly, "Something has grieved my little girl this evening; I will not ask what it is, because you may not like to tell me; but you must not imagine evils, Ellen. I know you have done, and are doing, the duty of a good affectionate child, nursing your suffering mother, bearing with intervals of impatience, which her invalid state occasions, and giving up all your own wishes to sit quietly by her: I have not seen you, my child, but I know those who have, and this has pleased me, and, what is of much more consequence, it proves you have not forgotten all I told you of your Father in Heaven, that even a little child can try to love and serve Him."

"But have you not told me those who are good are always happy?" inquired Ellen; "then I cannot be good, though indeed I try to be so, for I do not think I am happy, for I can never laugh and sing, and talk, as Edward does."

"You are not in such strong health as your brother, my dear little girl, and you have had many things to make you unhappy, which Edward has not. But you must try and remember that even if it please God that sometimes you should be more sorrowful than other children, He loves you notwithstanding. I am sure you have not forgotten the story of Joseph that I told you a few Sundays ago. God so loved him, as to give him the power of foretelling events, and enabling him to do a great deal of good, but when he was taken away from his father and sold as a slave, and thrown into prison amongst cruel strangers, he could not have been very happy, Ellen. Yet still, young as he was, little more than a child in those days, and thrown amongst those who did not know right from wrong, he remembered all that his father had taught him, and prayed to God, and tried to love and obey Him; and God was pleased with him, and gave him grace to continue good, and at last so blessed him, as to permit him to see his dear father and darling brother again."

"But Joseph was his father's favorite child," was Ellen's sole rejoinder; and the tears, which were checked in the eagerness with which she had listened, seemed again ready to burst forth. "He must have been happy when he thought of that."

"I do not think so, my dear Ellen," replied Mr. Myrvin, more moved than he chose to betray, "for being

his father's favorite first excited the dislike and envy of his brothers, and caused them to wish to send him away. There was no excuse indeed for their conduct; but perhaps if Joseph had always remained near his father, he might have been spoiled by too great indulgence, and never become as good as he afterwards was. Perhaps in his solitary prison he might even have regretted that his father had not treated them all alike, as then the angry feelings of his brothers would not have been called forth. So you see, being a favorite will not always make us happy, Ellen. It is indeed very delightful to be loved and caressed, and if we try to do our duty and love as much as we can, even if we are not sure of being loved at first, we may be quite certain that we shall be loved and happy at last. Do you understand me, my child?"

The question was almost needless, for Ellen's large eyes had never moved from his face, and their expression was so full of intelligence and feeling, that the whole countenance seemed lighted up. "Then do you think mamma will recover?" she eagerly exclaimed; "will she ever love me?—oh, if I thought so, I could never, never be naughty again!"

"She will love you, my dear Ellen," replied Mr. Myrvin, now visibly affected. "I cannot, I dare not tell you that she will recover to love you on earth, but if indeed it be God's will that she should go to Him, she will look down on you from Heaven and love you far more than she has done yet, for she will know then how much you love her."

"And will she know if I do all she wishes—if I love and help Edward?" asked Ellen, in a low, half-frightened voice; and little did Mr. Myrvin imagine how vividly

and how indelibly his reply was registered in the child's memory.

"It is a question none can answer positively, Ellen, but it is my own firm belief, that the beloved ones we have lost are permitted to watch over and love us still, and that they see us and are often near us, though we cannot see them. But even to help Edward," he continued, somewhat anxiously, "you must not be tempted—"

He was interrupted by the appearance of a stranger, who, addressing him courteously, apologised for his intrusion, and noticing the children, inquired if both were his.

Mr. Myrvin replied, he could only lay claim to one; the little girl was Miss Fortescue.

"And my name is Hamilton, so I think I have an uncle's privilege," was the reply; and Ellen, to her astonishment, received an affectionate embrace from the unknown relative, whom her mother's ill-judged words had taught her actually to dread. Mr. Myrvin gladly welcomed him, and, in the interest of the conversation which followed, forgot the lesson he had been so anxious to impress upon Ellen. Arthur accompanied her to the garden gate, and the gentlemen soon afterwards entered the cottage together.

Days merged into weeks, and still Mrs. Fortescue lingered; but her weakness increasing so painfully from alternate fever and exhaustion, that to remove her was impossible. It was the first time that Mrs. Hamilton had ever been separated from her children, and there were many disagreeables attendant on nursing a beloved invalid in that confined cottage; and with only those little luxuries and comforts that could be pro-

cured (and even these were obtained with difficulty, for the nearest town was twenty miles distant), but not a selfish or repining thought entered Mrs. Hamilton's mind. It was filled with thankfulness, not only that she was permitted thus to tend a sister, whom neither error, nor absence, nor silence could estrange from her heart, but that she was spared long enough for her gentle influence and enduring love to have some effect in changing her train of thought, calming that fearful irritability, and by slow degrees permitting her to look with resignation and penitent hope to that hour which no human effort could avert. That Mr. Myrvin should seek Mrs. Hamilton's society and delight in conversing with her, Mrs. Fortescue considered so perfectly natural, that the conversations which took place in her sick room, whenever she was strong enough to bear them, excited neither surprise nor impatience. Different as she was, wilfully as she had always neglected the mild counsels and example of her sister, the years of separation and but too often excited self-reproach had fully awakened her to Mrs. Hamilton's superiority. She had never found any one at all like her,—so good and holy, yet so utterly unassuming; and the strong affection, even the deep emotion in one usually so controlled, with which her sister had met her, naturally increased these feelings.

"Ah, you and Emmeline will find much to converse about," had been her address to Mr. Myrvin, on his first introduction to Mrs. Hamilton. "Talk as much as you please, and do not mind me. With Emmeline near me I can restrain irritability which must have frightened you away. I know she is right. Oh, would to God I had always been like her!" and the suffering

betrayed in the last words was a painful contrast with the lightness of her previous tone.

Mr. Myrvin answered soothingly, and for the first time his words were patiently received. From listening listlessly Mrs. Fortescue, by slow degrees, became interested in the conversations between him and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, and so a change in sentiments was gradually wrought, which by any other and harsher method of proceeding would have been sought for in vain.

One evening as Mrs. Hamilton sat watching the faded countenance of her patient, and recalling those days of youth and buoyancy, when it seemed as if neither death nor care could ever have assailed one so bright and lovely, Edward, before he sought his favorite stream, threw his arms round her neck, and pressed his rosy lips on her cheek, as thus to wish her good bye.

"He will repay you for all your care, dearest Emmeline," his mother said, with a heavy sigh, as he left the room; "I know he has what you and your husband will think faults, but, oh, for my sake, do not treat him harshly; his noble spirit will be broken if you do!"

"Dearest Eleanor, dismiss all such fears. Am I not a mother equally with yourself? and do you think when your children become mine I shall show any difference between them and my own? You would trust me even in former years, surely you will trust me now?"

"Indeed, indeed, I do; you were always kind and forbearing with me, when I little deserved it. But my poor Edward, it is so hard to part with him, and he loves me so fondly!" and a few natural tears stole down her cheek.

"And he shall continue to love you, dearest Eleanor; and oh, believe me, all that you have been to him I will be. I have won the devoted affection of all my own darlings, and I do not fear to gain the love of yours; and then it will be an easy task to make them happy as my own."

"Edward's love you will very quickly obtain, if it be not yours already; but Ellen you will have more trouble with. She is a strange, cold, unloveable child."

"Are the dispositions of your children so unlike? I should not have fancied Ellen cold; she is timid, but that I thought would wear off when she knew me better."

"It is not timidity; I never knew her otherwise than cold and reserved from her birth. I never could feel the same towards her as I did towards Edward, and therefore there must be something in Ellen to prevent it."

Mrs. Hamilton did not think so, but she answered gently, "Are you quite sure, my dear Eleanor, that you have equally studied the characters of both your children? because you know there are some cases which require more study and carefulness than others."

"I never was fond of studying anything, Emmeline, as you may remember," replied Mrs. Fortescue, painfully trying to smile, "and therefore I dare say I have not studied my children as you have yours. Besides, you know I always thought, and still think, the doctrine of mothers forming the characters of their children, and all that good people say about the importance of early impressions, perfectly ridiculous. The disposition for good or bad, loving or unloving, is theirs from the

moment of their birth, and what human efforts can alter that? Why the very infancy of my children was different; Edward was always laughing, and animated, and happy; Ellen fretful and peevish, and so heavy that she never seemed even to know when I entered the room, while Edward would spring into my arms, and shout and laugh only to see me. Now what conduct on my part could have done this? Surely I was justified in feeling differently towards such opposite dispositions; and I know I never made more difference between them than—than papa did between us, Emmeline, and I have had greater reason to be partial; you were always better than I was.”

She ceased from exhaustion, but the flush which had risen to her temples, and the trembling hands evinced the agitation always called for by the mention of her father, which Mrs. Hamilton, with earnest tenderness, endeavoured to soothe.

“I must speak, Emmeline,” she continued, natural impetuosity for the moment regaining ascendancy; “how did I repay my fond father’s partiality? his too great indulgence? Did I not bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Did I not throw shame and misery upon him by my conduct to the ill-fated one he had chosen for my husband? Did I not?—oh, my God, my God! Death may indeed be merciful!—my Edward might do the same by me!” and, shuddering violently, she hid her face on her sister’s bosom.

It was long before Mrs. Hamilton could calm that fearful agitation, long before her whispered words of heavenly hope, and peace, and pardon—if indeed she believed—could bring comfort; but they did at length,

and such fearful paroxysms returned at longer and longer intervals, and at length ceased, in the deep submission and clinging trust to which she was at last permitted to attain. Though Mrs. Hamilton was detained six weeks at Llangwillan, her devoted attendance on her sister prevented anything more than occasional observation of the children so soon about to be committed to her care. That Edward was most engaging and riveted her affection at once, and that Ellen was unlike any child she had ever known or seen, she could not but feel, but she was not one to decide on a mere feeling. Her present mournful task prevented all actual interference with them, except the endeavour by kindly notice to win their confidence and love. His mother's illness and his uncle's presence, besides, for the present, his perfect freedom with regard to employment, had deprived Edward of all inclination to rebel or exert his self-will, and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton both felt that he certainly had fewer faults, than was generally the consequence of unlimited indulgence. Whether Ellen's extreme attention to her mother, her silent but ever ready help when her aunt required it, proceeded from mere cold duty, or really had its origin in affection, Mrs. Hamilton could not satisfactorily decide. Her sister had avowed partiality, but that neglect and unkindness could have been shown to such an extent by a mother as to create the cold exterior she beheld was so utterly incomprehensible, so opposed to every dictate of maternal love, which she knew so well, that she actually could not even imagine it. She could believe in the possibility of a preference for one child more than another, but not in utter neglect and actual dislike. She could imagine that Ellen's love

for her mother might be less warm than Edward's, believing, as she did, that a parent must call for a child's affection, not be satisfied with leaving all to Nature; but if it were not love that dictated Ellen's conduct, it was strange and almost unnatural, and so, unpleasing that so young a child should have such an idea of duty. But these were only passing thoughts; cost what trouble it might, Mrs. Hamilton determined she would understand her niece as she did her own children.

But though to her Ellen was a riddle, to her sister Nature was resuming her sway, too late, alas! for all, save the mother's own reproaches. Her weakness had become such that days would pass when speech, save a few whispered words, was impossible; but she would gaze upon her child, as hour after hour she would sit by the bed resisting all Edward's entreaties, and sometimes even her aunt's to go and play, and long to fold her to her heart, and confess she had been cruelly unjust, and that she did love her now almost as much as Edward, but she was much too weak to do more than feel. And Ellen remained unconscious of the change, except that now and then as she would bring her nourishment or bend over to bathe her forehead, her mother would, as if involuntarily, kiss her cheek and murmur some caressing word. And Ellen longed to cling to her neck and say how much she loved her, but she did not dare, and she would hurry out of the room to conceal her tears, instead of returning the caress, thus unhappily confirming the idea of natural coldness.

Even the comfort of sitting by her mother was at length denied her. Mrs. Fortescue became so alarmingly and painfully ill, that Mrs. Hamilton felt it an un-

necessary trial for her children to witness it, especially as they could be no comfort to her, for she did not know them. The evening of the fourth day she recovered sufficiently to partake of the sacrament with her sister and Mr. Hamilton, and then entreat that her children might be brought to her. She felt herself what the physician had imparted to her sister, that the recovery of her senses would in all human probability be followed in a few hours by death, and her last thoughts were on them.

Edward, full of glee at being permitted to see her again, bounded joyfully into the room, but the fearful change in that beloved face so startled and terrified him, that he uttered a loud cry, and throwing himself beside her, sobbed upon her bosom. Mrs. Fortescue was fearfully agitated, but she conjured her sister not to take him from her, and her heavy eyes wandered painfully round the room in search of Ellen.

"Come to me, Ellen, I have done you injustice, my sweet child," she murmured in a voice that Ellen never in her life forgot, and she clung to her in silent agony. "I have not done my duty to you, I know,—I feel I have not, and it is too late now to atone. I can only pray God to bless you, and raise you up a kinder parent than I have been! Bless, bless you both." Faintness overpowered her, and she lay for several minutes powerless, in Mrs. Hamilton's arms. Edward, in passionate grief, refused to stir from the bed; and Ellen, almost unconsciously, sunk on her knees by Mr. Myrvin.

"My own sister, bless you—for all you have been to me—all you will be to my children—may they repay you better than I have done, Emmeline! You are

right, there is but one hope, our Saviour, for the sinner—it is mine.”—

Were the broken sentences that, in a voice scarcely audible, and at long intervals, escaped Mrs. Fortescue's lips, and then her head sunk lower on Mrs. Hamilton's bosom, and there was a long, long silence, broken only by Edward's low and half-suffocated sobs. And he knew not, guessed not the grief that was impending. He only felt that his mother was worse, not better, as he had believed would and must be when his aunt arrived. He had never seen death, though Ellen had; and he had passionately and wilfully refused either to listen to or believe in his uncle's and Mr. Myrvin's gentle attempts to prepare him for his loss. Terrified at the continued silence, at the cold heavy feel of his mother's hand, as, when Mr. Myrvin and the widow gently removed her from the still-supporting arm of Mrs. Hamilton, it fell against his, he started up, and clinging to his aunt, implored her to speak to him, to tell him why his mother looked so strange and white, her hand felt so cold, and why she would not speak to and kiss him, as she always did, when he was grieved.

Mrs. Hamilton raised her head from her husband's shoulder, and struggling with her own deep sorrow, she drew her orphan nephew closer to her, and said, in a low earnest voice, “My Edward, did you not hear your mother pray God to bless you?”

The child looked at her inquiringly.

“That good God has taken her to Himself, my love; He has thought it better to remove her from us, and take her where she will never know pain nor illness more.”

"But she is lying there," whispered Edward, in a frightened voice, and half hiding his face in his aunt's dress—"she is not taken away. Why will she not speak to me?"

"She cannot speak, my sweet boy! the soul which enabled her to speak, and smile, and live, was God's gift, and it has pleased Him to recall it."

"And will she never, never speak to me again? will she never kiss me—never call me her own darling, beautiful Edward again?" he almost screamed in passionate grief, as the truth at length forced itself upon him. "Mamma, mamma, my own dear, pretty, good mamma, oh! do not go away from me—or let me go with you—let me die too; no one will love me or kiss me as you have done." And even the natural awe and terror of death gave way before his grief; he clung to the body of his mother so passionately, so convulsively, that it required actual force to remove him. And for hours his aunt and sister watched over and tried to soothe and comfort him in vain; he would only rouse himself angrily to ask Ellen how she could know what he felt; she had never loved their mother as he had—she did not know what he had lost—she could not feel as he did, and then relapse into tears and sobs. Ellen did not attempt reply. She thought, if it were such pain to her to lose her mother, who had only the last few weeks evinced affection for her, it must indeed be still more suffering to him; and though his angry words grieved and hurt her (for she knew she did love her mother most fondly, her idea of her own extreme inferiority acquitting her unconsciously of all injustice towards her, and made her believe that she had loved Edward best only because

he was so much better than herself) his very grief caused her to love and admire him still more, and to believe that she really did not feel as much as he did. And yet before they quitted Llangwillan, which they did the second day after Mrs. Fortescue's funeral, Edward could laugh and talk as usual—except when any object recalled his mother; and poor Ellen felt that though she had fancied she was not happy before, she was much more unhappy now. Her fancy naturally vivid, and rendered more so from her having been left so much to herself, dwelt morbidly on all that had passed in her mother's illness, on every caress, every unusual word of affection, and on Mr. Myrvin's assurance that she would love her in Heaven; the promise she had made to love and help Edward returned to her memory again and again, and each time with the increased determination to keep it solemnly. It was not for her mother's sake alone, and connected only with her; perhaps, had it not been for the careful instructions of her father, whom, as we shall presently see, she had had cause almost to idolise, Ellen might have become indifferent to her mother and envious of Edward. But his repeated instructions, under all circumstances, to love, cherish, and obey her mother, had been indelibly engraved, and heightened natural feeling. She believed that to keep the promise, which had so evidently pleased her mother, would be also obeying her father, and this double incentive gave it a weight and consequence, which, could Mrs. Hamilton have known it, would have caused her great anxiety, and urged its removal. But Ellen had been too long accustomed to hide every thought and feeling to betray that which, child as she was, she

believed sacred between herself and her mother. Mrs. Hamilton watched her in silence, and trusted to time and care to do their work; and by enabling her to understand her character, permit her to guide it rightly.

The morning of their intended departure was bright and sunny, and before even Widow Morgan was moving, Ellen had quitted her little bed and was in the churchyard by her mother's grave. She sat there thinking so intently, that she did not know how time passed, till she was roused by her favorite Arthur Myrvin's voice.

"Up so early, Ellen, why I thought I should have been first, to show you I had not forgotten my promise." And he displayed some choice flower-roots which he commenced planting round the grave.

"Dear Arthur, how very kind you are; but you look so sad—what is the matter? Does not Mr. Myrvin like you to do this—pray, don't then."

"No, no, Ellen, my father said I was right, and that he would take care of the flowers also himself. I am only sorry you are going away, and to live so differently to what we do—you will quite forget me."

"Indeed, indeed I shall not, dear Arthur; I can never forget those who have been so kind to me as you and dear Mr. Myrvin; I would much rather stay here always with you, than go amongst strangers again, but I heard my aunt say last night, that perhaps Mr. Myrvin would let you come and see us sometimes—and you will like that, will you not?" Arthur did not seem quite sure, whether he would like it or not; but they continued talking till his task was completed, and Arthur, at Ellen's earnest request, for she suddenly feared her aunt would be displeased at her having stayed out so long, returned

with her to the cottage; the silent kiss, however, which she received, when Arthur explained what had detained them, reassured her, and bound her yet closer to the kind relative whom, if timidity had permitted, she would already have so loved.

The novelty of his situation, the rapid and pleasant movement of his uncle's carriage, the idea of the new relations he was about to meet, and an unconfessed but powerful feeling of his own increased consequence in being so nearly connected to wealth and distinction, all had their effect on Edward, and his eye sparkled and his cheek glowed, as if all sorrow had entirely passed away; not that he had ceased to think of his mother, for the least reference to her would fill his eyes with tears and completely check his joy—but still delight predominated. Ellen felt more and more the wish to shrink into herself, for the farther they left Llangwillan, the more painfully she missed Mr. Myrvin and his son, and the more she shrunk from encountering strangers. Edward she knew would speedily find companions to love, and to be loved by, and he would think still less of her. Her aunt would soon be surrounded by her own children, and then how could she expect to win her love? And Ellen looked intently and silently from the carriage-window—her uncle believed on the many-flowered hedge and other objects of interest by which they passed—his wife imagined, to hide the tears that trembled in her eyes, but which she had determined should not fall.

CHAPTER III.

RETROSPECTION.—THE LOWLY SOUGHT.—THE HAUGHTY
FOILED.

IN order clearly to understand the allusions of the previous chapters, and the circumstances which had formed the different characters of Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Fortescue, it will be necessary to take a retrospective glance on their early lives. Should it be uninteresting to the more youthful of our readers, we will beg them to proceed at once to "Traits of Character," but to their elder relatives, we hope the matter will prove of sufficient interest to obtain perusal.

Emmeline and Eleanor Manvers were the daughters of Lord Delmont, a nobleman whose title and rank were rather burdensome than otherwise, from the want of sufficient means to keep them up as inclination and position warranted. Lady Delmont, whose energetic yet gentle character would have greatly ameliorated the petty vexations of her husband, died when Emmeline was only seven, Eleanor five, and Charles, her only boy, an infant of three years old. A widow lady, Mrs. Harcourt by name, had been selected by Lady Delmont, in her last illness, as instructress and guardian of her daughters. Her wishes, always laws to her doating husband, were promptly fulfilled, and Mrs.

Harcourt, two months after her friend's death, assumed the arduous and responsible duties for which her high character well fitted her.

With Emmeline, though there were naturally some faults to correct, an indolence and weakness to overcome, and apparently no remarkable natural aptitude for acquirement, her task was comparatively easy, for her pupil had the capabilities, not only of affection but of reverence to a very great extent, and once loving and respecting Mrs. Harcourt, not a command was neglected nor a wish unfulfilled. Eleanor, on the contrary, though so gifted that teaching might have been a complete labour of love—by self-will, violent passions, and a most determined want of veneration, even of common respect, a resolute opposition from her earliest years to the wishes of Mrs. Harcourt, because she was merely a governess, so much her inferior in rank, rendered the task of education one of the most difficult and painful that can be conceived,—increased from the injudicious partiality of Lord Delmont. It was not indeed the culpable negligence and dislike which Eleanor afterwards displayed towards her own, but originating in the fancy that Mrs. Harcourt was unjust, and Emmeline was her favorite. Lord Delmont was one of those unfortunately weak irresolute characters that only behold the surface of things, and are therefore utterly incapable of acting either with vigour or judgment. When he did venture into the precincts of his daughters' apartments, he generally found Eleanor in sobs and tears, and Emmeline quietly pursuing her daily duties. That Mrs. Harcourt often entreated his influence with her younger pupil, to change her course

of conduct, he never remembered longer than the time her expostulations lasted. Once or twice indeed he did begin to speak seriously, but Eleanor would throw her arms round his neck and kiss him, call him every endearing name, and beg him not to look so much like grave, cross Mrs. Harcourt, or she should think she had indeed no one to love her; and her beautiful eyes would swell with tears, and her voice quiver, so that her gratified father would forget all his reproof, and give her some indulgence to make up for the injustice and harshness she encountered in the school-room. Her power once thus experienced, of course, was never resigned. Her father's appearance in their study was always the signal for her tears, which she knew would confirm all his ideas of Mrs. Harcourt's unjust partiality.

And this idea was strengthened as they grew older, and masters for various accomplishments somewhat lightened Mrs. Harcourt's actual labours. Emmeline's steady application and moderate abilities were lost sight of in the applause always elicited by her younger sister; whose natural gifts alike in music, languages, and drawing had full play, directly she was released even in part from the hated thralldom of her governess.— Lord Delmont had been accustomed to hear Eleanor's beauty extolled, and now the extraordinary versatility and brilliancy of her talents became the theme of every tongue. Professors are naturally proud of a pupil who does them more than justice, and Miss Eleanor Manvers was in consequence held up in very many families, whom Lord Delmont only casually knew, and spoken of by very many again to him, knowing his weak point and

thus seeking to curry favour. Mrs. Harcourt was the only one from whom he never heard Eleanor's praises, and the only one, who spoke in praise of Emmeline. It must then be wilful blindness on her part, and the father felt indignant, but in spite of himself had too much real respect for her individually to do more than redouble his indulgence to Eleanor. Emmeline could not complain of her father's neglect, for he was both kind and affectionate to her; but she did sometimes wish she could be quite sure that he loved her as much as her sister; and her deep affections, unsuspected by her father, rejected and laughed at by Eleanor, twined themselves closer and closer round Mrs. Harcourt, and her brother Charles, on whom she actually doted, and who returned her affection with one quite as fond and warm, as a happy, laughter-loving, frank-hearted boy had it in his power to bestow; yet even his holidays were times of as much suffering as joy to his sister, from the violent quarrels which were continually taking place between him and Eleanor. Emmeline, happy in herself and Mrs. Harcourt's companionship, could endure Eleanor's determined supremacy and, except where her conscience disapproved, yielded to her. But this could not be expected from Charles, who, despite his elder sister's gentle entreaties, would stand up for what he called her rights, and declare that when he was at home, Miss Eleanor should not lord it over the whole family. Eleanor would of course quarrel first with him and then appeal to her father, who without hearing the case would give her right, and harshly condemn Charles, whose high spirit revolted; and unable to bear with his father's weakness of character, as he ought to have done,

would answer disrespectfully; and words succeeded words till Charles in a desperate passion would seek Emmeline's chamber, and his father, though he actually deeply loved and was very proud of his son, wished that the holidays were over and Charles safe again at school.

Trifling as domestic disputes may seem in description, they never fail in their painful reality to banish all lasting happiness. Emmeline could bear that her father should prefer Eleanor to herself, but that he should be unjust to her darling Charles, and that Charles should increase this evil by dispute and self-will, tried her severely, and obliged her often and often to fly to the solitude of her own chamber, lest her temper also should fail, and to defend her brother, she should forget her duty to her father. But with her Mrs. Harcourt's lessons had indeed been blessed. The spirit of true heartfelt piety, which she had sought to instil into her youthful charge, even more by the examples of her daily life than by precepts, had become Emmeline's, young as she still was, and enabled her not only to bear up against the constant petty annoyances of her home, but the heavy trial sustained in the death of Mrs. Harcourt, just as she was looking forward to her entrance in the gay world, under her maternal guardianship, and her parting with her brother, who not two months afterwards left her to fulfil his darling wish of going to sea.

At eighteen, then, Emmeline Manvers became the mistress of her father's establishment, and had to encounter alone, not only the suffering of bereavement—in which, though Lord Delmont sincerely respected Mrs. Harcourt, he could not sympathize, and at which, after the first shock and momentary remorse for her own conduct to

so true a friend, Eleanor, if she did not actually rejoice, felt so very greatly relieved, as to be irritated and angry at Emmeline's quiet sorrow—but the separation from her brother and all the cares and disagreeables of such strict economy at home, as would permit the sustaining a proper position in society, so that the necessity of economy should not even be suspected. It was this regard of appearances which so chafed and pained Emmeline's upright and independent spirit. Not that Lord Delmont even for appearances would go beyond his income, but still there were obliged concealments and other petty things which his daughter could not bear. Mrs. Harcourt's trial—a widow, compelled not only to teach for her subsistence, but to part with her only child, who had been adopted by a married sister, living in Italy—appeared to Emmeline's ideas of truth and honour preferable to appearing richer than they really were. But on this subject even less than on any other, she knew there was no chance of sympathy, and so she devoted all the energies of her matured and well-regulated mind to correcting the evil as much as it lay in her individual power, and in the year which her earnest entreaties prevailed on her father to permit her remaining in quiet retirement, before she entered the world, Lord Delmont was astonished at the greater comfort and increase of dignity which pervaded his establishment. He never had chosen Mrs. Harcourt to interfere with his household concerns, believing that he conducted them himself, when in reality he was completely governed by his housekeeper and steward. Mrs. Harcourt's penetration had seen and regretted this, and had endeavoured so to guide and instruct Emmeline,

that when she became old enough to claim her right as mistress the evil should be remedied. Could she have looked down on the child of her love, she would indeed have rejoiced at the beautiful fruition of her labours. Lord Delmont was not astonished and delighted only, a feeling of respect towards his gentle, his truthful child entered his heart, such as he had experienced towards none, save her mother. Emmeline would indeed have thought all her toils repaid, could she have known this, but the very feeling prevented the display of that caressing affection he still lavished on Eleanor, and the tears of his elder girl often fell thick and fast from the painful longing for one similar caress, one evidence on his part, that, though neither so beautiful, nor talented, nor engaging as Eleanor, she could yet minister to his comfort and increase his happiness.

But Emmeline's strong feeling of religion, while it enabled her to bear up against care and the constant and most painful feeling of loneliness, rendered the trial of beholding her sister's wilful course of error, if possible, still more severe. She knew that all her affectionate councils were worse than useless, that though Eleanor could be even caressingly affectionate when it served her purpose, would even listen to her at the moment of suffering from some too hasty impulse, she had no lasting influence. And this became more and more evident as Eleanor became the almost constant companion of the Marchioness Lascelles, their only female relative. It was the evil influence of this lady which had so increased Eleanor's natural repugnance to Mrs. Harcourt's gentle sway, that for full two years before the latter's death the flattery of Lady

Lascelles and Eleanor's passionate entreaties had prevailed on Lord Delmont to permit his daughter being more with her than with her sister and governess. Lady Lascelles was a woman of the world, utterly heartless, highly distinguished, and supremely fashionable. At her house all the ton of the beau monde congregated, and scandal, frivolity, and *esprit* were the prevailing topics, diversified with superficial opinions of the literature, arts, and politics of the day, and various sentimental episodes, which the lady of the house endured for the sake of variety. Here Eleanor, even at fourteen, was made a popular idol; her extreme beauty, her vivacity, her talents, her sharpness of repartee, all were admired, extolled, and encouraged. At seventeen she was introduced and initiated into all the mysteries of an ultra-fashionable life, and very speedily added to her other accomplishments—all the arts of a finished and heartless coquette.

With Lady Lascelles for her chaperon, it was not very surprising that Emmeline Manvers shrunk in pain and dread from her introduction into society; but yet she knew her social duties too well to refuse, and, by an affectation of superior sanctity, which of course would have been the charge levelled against her, throw a sneer upon those holy feelings and spiritual principles which had become part of her very being. She entered into society, but the isolation to a heart like hers of the coteries of Lady Lascelles and her friends, was indeed most painful, and aggravated by the constant dread which the contemplation of Eleanor's reckless career could not but occasion.

But Emmeline's trial of loneliness was happily not

of very long duration. At a ball, which was less exclusive than the assemblages of Lady Lascelles, the attention of both sisters was attracted to a young man, by name Arthur Hamilton—Eleanor, from his distinguished appearance and extreme reserve, Emmeline, by the story attached to his name. His father had so distinguished himself in the amelioration of the peasantry and working classes in various parts of England, in addition to various services of a private and confidential nature from the home government to the courts abroad, that a viscountcy was offered to his acceptance. The message from royalty reached him on his death-bed, and though, from the faint and flickering accents with which he replied to the intended honour, it seemed as if he declined it, it was attributed to the natural feelings of a dying man, seeing the utter nothingness of earthly honours, and the title was generously proposed to his son. But Arthur Hamilton had not been the pupil and friend of his father in vain. With a calm dignity and uncompromising independence, he declared that he had neither claim nor heirship to the reward of his father's services; that he believed his parent would himself have refused it, preferring the honorable distinction of being an untitled English gentleman, to the unvalued honour of a newly-created lordship. He respectfully thanked the government for the honour they intended, but decisively refused it—that his dearest inheritance was his father's name.

Of course this most extraordinary decision was canvassed again and again in the fashionable world, meeting there with very little appreciation, because it sprang from much higher feelings than the world could

comprehend. By many he was imagined very little removed from insane—by others as actuated by some ulterior motive, which would be sure to display itself some day—by all regarded with curiosity—by some few with earnest, quiet, heartfelt admiration; and of this number was not only Emmeline Manvers, but her father; who, though weak and yielding, was not worldly, and could admire honorable independence, even while some of his friends succeeded in persuading him that in this case it nearly reached romance.

Arthur Hamilton was a star creating a sensation; it signified little to Eleanor Manvers why or wherefore, but she fully resolved to conquer him and chain him, as she had already done innumerable others, victim to her charms. His very reserve deepened her ardent longing, and the difficulty only strengthened her resolution, but she tried in vain; for the first time she was completely and entirely foiled, and she disliked him accordingly—a dislike increasing to actual abhorrence, —when the truth at length forced itself upon her, that he admired, conversed with, evidently sought the society of her sister, whom she chose to charge with deceit and underhand dealing, with all the violence of angry passion and mortified defeat.

Emmeline bore the storm calmly, for her conscience perfectly acquitted her. She was not indeed indifferent to Arthur Hamilton, but she had tried hard to prevent the ascendancy of affection, for she had heard that he still mourned the loss of a beloved one to whom he had been for many years engaged. And deep was her thankful joy, and unexpected indeed the intensity of her happiness, when six months after their first intro-

duction he related to her the heavy trial of his early life, and concluded by asking her if she could indeed accept a heart which had so loved another, but which was now entirely her own, and happier than he had once believed it ever could be. The very frankness of his avowal increased the feelings of reverence and regard he had already inspired, and to the great delight, and no little pride of Lord Delmont, his elder daughter, who had been by Lady Lascelles' coterie so overlooked and neglected, who had been by many for years considered a mere foil to the beauty and talent of her younger sister, was united before she was twenty, to a man who—however his high principles might have excited laughter as highflown romance, his unbending integrity and dislike of the pleasures and amusements, but too often the sole pursuit of the wealthy, exposed him to the charge of severity and eccentricity—was yet sought, and his connexion deemed a most desirable *partie* by all and every family who had marriageable daughters.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIVE.—EFFECTS OF COQUETRY.—OBEDIENCE
AND DISOBEDIENCE.

ELEANOR's unfounded dislike towards Arthur Hamilton did not decrease when he became her brother-in-law; she chose to believe that he had injured her by being the only one who had remained proof against all the fascinations she had thrown in his way. Even in her childhood, if any one chanced to notice Emmeline more than herself it was considered a mortal offence, and the person who had so offended was scarcely spoken to again. Therefore that Emmeline should be married before herself, and to the man she intended to captivate, but *not to love*, or wed, was an offence visited upon her sister by the withdrawal of her speech for six months, and on Mr. Hamilton by an insulting haughtiness of demeanour towards him, at which he only smiled; and, to her extreme annoyance, she found that even as she had failed to fascinate, she equally failed to offend. He *would* speak to her, *would* treat her with courtesy, and the quiet familiarity of an older relative—and more, actually remonstrate with her conduct whenever he thought it wrong. It was the recollection of this time, yet more than actual present feeling, which had occasioned the mistaken impressions she had infused into both her children, of the extreme severity and harshness of

their uncle, thoughtlessly indeed, for the present was always all to her, and if she did think that they might one day be under his charge, she little imagined the unhappiness and mischief which their supposition of his unbending sternness might engender.

To Emmeline, the change in her young life was so marvellous, so complete—care, anxiety, loneliness, that sinking of the whole frame and heart, from the absence of appreciation and social kindness, had so departed, leaving in their stead such an intensity of quiet domestic happiness, that it was long before her full heart could believe it reality, and rest secure. She had always longed for one to reverence, to cling to, and her husband gave her room for both. As his betrothed, even before their marriage, she had been introduced to very different society to that of the Marchioness; she beheld him revered, loved, appealed to by the wisest and the best men, often older than himself. That this man should so love, cherish, and actually reverence her, no wonder that under the magic of such feelings her character matured, displaying such engaging and unsuspected qualities, that even her husband often looked at her with astonishment, playfully asking her, if she could be the same calm, almost too quiet and seemingly too cold, Emmeline Manvers whom he had first seen. Her very talents, which had seemed worthless compared to her sister's, were called forth by her husband. She found that her voice and her touch on either piano or harp could give him exquisite pleasure, and this once discovered, she made such improvement as almost to surprise herself. She found the sketches taken from the various lovely spots in the vicinity of their noble seat, and in

which Devonshire abounds, delighted him, and when Eleanor did visit Oakwood, she was astounded at the various beautiful drawings, which evinced the employment of that leisure which she had declared must be even to the quiet Emmeline a horrid bore.

To Lord Delmont the change in his daughter was much more astonishing than to her husband. He was very often at Oakwood (particularly when a little grandson was added to the happy party), for his home under Eleanor's extravagant and heedless management had lost all the comfort which Emmeline had bestowed. He had begun, too, to discover that his darling, his still favorite Eleanor, was not faultless. Emmeline's generous assistance and determination to spare her father all discomfort had concealed Eleanor's personal extravagance from him; but after her marriage, as Eleanor's fashionable amusements increased, so did the quantity and amount of her bills, which, as the young lady did not seem inclined to settle them, were sent to her father. Lord Delmont was painfully startled, and with his usual want of judgment spoke to Eleanor at the very moment that he felt most angry; unaccustomed to reproof from him, she retorted with equal passion, and a violent altercation ensued, which ended in Eleanor ordering the carriage and driving to Lady Lascelles, declaring she could not think of returning home, till her father had sufficiently recovered his senses for her to do so in safety.

The interference of Emmeline at length succeeded in restoring peace, but Lord Delmont's eyes had been rudely opened, and, as is unhappily too often the case with those weak characters where over-indulgence of child-

hood, has occasioned those annoyances of ungoverned youth, he became irritable and sometimes even harsh with Eleanor, which conduct threw her still more with Lady Lascelles. As to joining society with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, when they were in London, Eleanor would not hear of it. But to her sister's great joy and some surprise, she accepted an invitation to Oakwood, a short time after little Percy's birth, and, still more surprising, condescended to make herself agreeable. The London season had tired her, and she thought she might just as well be dull on the banks of the Dart in August and September as in some stupid watering-place. Mr. Hamilton, despite her dislike, which she cared not to avow, she found could be at least very entertaining; her father was more like his former self, her sister far more delightful and lovely than she ever thought she could be, and her nephew certainly a pretty little plague. Then Mr. Hamilton had a beautiful horse entirely for her use, and she rode exceedingly well and was greatly admired. She was seized with an exploring mania, and dragged Emmeline to every old ruin and dark wood within ten miles of Oakwood. Altogether the impression she left behind her, after a two months' visit, was such as to ease Mrs. Hamilton's great anxiety, more especially as it appeared from certain private conversations, that her affections were for the first time really engaged, and Emmeline had always fondly hoped that when that should be the case, Eleanor would become a very different person. Alas! penetrative as she was she had not yet learned her sister's character; simply because utter heartlessness in any woman she could not comprehend.

Her visit to her father in London in the winter removed all their rising hopes, and caused such increased and intense anxiety, as so to injure her already delicate health that her husband bore her back to Oakwood a full month before they had originally intended.— Whether or not Eleanor loved Lord Fitzclair, it was impossible to determine; but that he devotedly, passionately loved her, was only too evident, not only to the world but to herself, and this once confirmed, she left no method untried to torment, and so, as she declared it, try if his affections were worth having. He was half an Italian, and had inherited all the strong, fierce passions of that country, without one atom of self-control. Mr. Hamilton knew him well, far better than he knew himself, and conjured him to withdraw from the society of one who could never make him happy, and whose capricious conduct was so likely to render him desperate and miserable: he reasoned, entreated in vain. “She only wants to try the strength of my love,” was his sole reply; “and were she to torment health and life away, it will never change;—she will be mine yet.”

And to the astonishment of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, two months afterwards he proposed in form, and actually was accepted, with the sole condition that their engagement should be kept secret till it should please Eleanor to name the wedding day, which could not be at least for six or eight months.

This engagement might have eased anxiety, but the condition increased it, especially, as instead of coming to Oakwood, as Emmeline had asked and hoped, the latter part of the summer and autumn was to be spent

in Cheltenham with a very gay party, in which Eleanor was still of course the star. Mrs. Hamilton entered the nursery one morning earlier than usual, for her infant had not been well the night before, and she had already experienced the care as well as the joy of a mother. Her babe was better, and as he lay smilingly and happily in her lap, and watched the eager movements of his brother, she was only sensible of pleasure. The nurse had arranged the chairs in a long line, that Master Percy might, with their help, walk the whole length of the large and airy room. The feat mightily pleased the little gentleman, who having acquired the venerable age of fifteen months, liked better to feel his feet than crawl on the floor, or be carried about on any limbs but his own. Every two or three paces he stood nearly alone, and burst into a loud merry laugh, which was always echoed by a crow of joy from his little brother.

"Take care, Percy, love, don't fall and frighten mamma," said his young mother, who was watching him with such pleasure as to send for his father to share it. When her son, to prove how well he obeyed her commands to take care, stood for a second without any support, and then ran quite alone across the room, and with a yet louder laugh hid his rosy face in her lap. Mrs. Hamilton fondly kissed the little nestling head, and at that moment her husband entered the room. "Dearest Arthur," she eagerly exclaimed, "I was actually foolish enough to send for you. Herbert seems quite well; I was, it seems, needlessly alarmed, and Percy has this moment"—she stopped in sudden terror, for there was an expression on her husband's countenance of such unusual agitation, that though he

tried to smile when he heard her words, she could not conquer her alarm, more than to say, in a caressing voice, to her little boy—

“Will not Percy run to papa, and ask him why he looks so sad?”

The child looked up in her face, and then, as his father held out his arms to him, let go his mother's dress, and obeyed her. Mr. Hamilton caught him to his heart, held him for above a minute, kissed him fondly, and left the nursery without uttering a single word.

“Let me take Master Herbert, ma'am,” said the head nurse respectfully, for she saw that her mistress's unexpressed alarm had nearly overpowered her; and in a few minutes Emmeline was with her husband, whose agitation was so excessive, that even his wife's presence for the moment had scarcely power to calm him.

The tale was soon told. Eleanor's conduct since her engagement had been such as to excite the displeasure, not of her father alone, but actually of the Marchioness; who, though a weak and worldly woman, had yet some idea of propriety. As a near relation of Lord Delmont, Eleanor's engagement with Lord Fitzclair was of course told to her, and again and again she warned her that she was going too far, and might lose her lover before she was aware of it; but Eleanor only laughed at her, and at last won her over to the belief that it was certainly better to cure Fitzclair of his jealous tendency *before* marriage than afterwards. Lord Delmont's reproofs she was wont to silence, by invariably making them the signal of mortifying and annoying Lord Fitzclair still more than usual. Yet still at times she

relented, and so strengthened the love she had excited, so enhanced her own fascinations, that all the agony he had endured and was still, he knew, to endure, by an incomprehensible contradiction, riveted her power and hastened his own doom. Weak in all things but his love, he could not demand as his actual right the publication of their engagement. Eleanor vowed if he did, till she permitted him, she would have nothing more to say to him. She knew, though she did not say it, that once made known, a chain would be thrown round her actions, which she did not choose to endure. And father, lover, and friend, all feeling she was wrong, and the first and last repeatedly telling her so, had yet neither of them the resolution to contend with her, and compel the proper course.

A month of their visit to Cheltenham so passed, when Eleanor's attention was arrested by a new actor on the scene. She had begun to tire of her present satellites, and a young military captain, whose furlough from India had just expired, and whose pale face, somewhat melancholy expression, and very elegant figure presented a new subject for conquest impossible to be resisted, and it was, unhappily, only too easily achieved. She made no secret of her admiration, speaking of him in such terms to her intended husband as to excite anew every jealous feeling. It was easy for Captain Fortescue to discover Fitzclair was his rival; but believing himself decidedly the object of Eleanor's preference, he increased his attentions, little imagining the storm he was exciting, the more fearful from its determined suppression. Lord Delmont interfered several times, not only by reproaches to Eleanor, but by deter-

mined coldness to her new suitor. Finding at length that her encouragement actually neared a criminal extent, and after a desperately stormy interview, he solemnly declared that if she did not dismiss Captain Fortescue at once, he would shame her in the face of the whole world, by proclaiming her engagement with the young Marquis. Eleanor in equal anger declared that if he threatened, so too could she, and if he tormented her any more she would prevent all publication of her engagement, by herself snapping it asunder, and pledging her faith to Captain Fortescue. This was too much even for Lord Delmont. Declaring if she did so, a father's heaviest malediction should fall on her head, he hastily left her; and Eleanor very composedly went to prepare for an excursion on horseback with Fortescue, Fitzclair, and others.

When Lord Delmont's passions were once roused, even his ordinarily slender judgment entirely forsook him, and he did that which at another time, knowing Fitzclair as he did, he would have shrunk from. He sought him while still exasperated, upbraided him for his weakness in permitting Eleanor's unprincipled conduct, and warned him that, if he did not adopt some strong measures to prevent it, he would certainly lose her entirely.

The young man heard him without reply; but his face grew livid, and he clenched his hand till the blood started from the nails, and in this mood of concentrated passion joined the riding party. The exercise itself is to some temperaments unusually exciting, and the determined coldness of Eleanor to himself, and the eagerly-received devotion of Fortescue, maddened him.

He demanded an interview with her on their return home, struggled to speak calmly, expostulated, and, finally, reproached. Eleanor, already irritated; and beyond all that her lover, in general so obsequious and humble, should dare to call her to account, for mere amusement, combined with the recollection of Captain Fortescue's flattering vows and willing homage; excited her to an extent of which she was herself unconscious, inasmuch as she firmly believed, whatever she might say then, a few soft words would speedily obliterate. She told him that really his jealous temperament was beyond all endurance; that he certainly must intend her to despise and abhor him; and that the contrast he presented to Captain Fortescue was such as to make her most heartily wish to put an end to their engagement, as she felt quite sure it must only end in misery for both; and, without waiting for a reply, she haughtily brushed by him and disappeared.

Of the extent of Fitzclair's passion Eleanor had not the least idea, and this is saying a great deal, for she generally exaggerated her own power. She believed she had inflicted pain, but not as much as he deserved; and determined that she would torment him yet more at the ball that evening. But to her extreme mortification he did not appear, and there was a vague dread on her spirits as she retired for the night, which prevented anything like rest. His absence had excited surprise in all, especially Lady Lascelles, who knew that to leave Eleanor entirely to the attentions of young Fortescue was so unprecedented as to bode no good. But the wildest conjectures were far from reality. The very next morning all Cheltenham was thrown into the

most painful excitement by the incomprehensible and most extraordinary fact of the suicide of Lord Fitzclair; by what occasioned, plunged into such mystery that nothing but sudden aberration of mind was imagined, a belief justified by the very peculiar temperament and manners of the young nobleman during his sojourn with them. His will, a valuable present, with a few lines of regard to his faithful attendant, and a letter addressed to Arthur Hamilton, Esq., were the sole evidences that the awful deed had not been committed without some preparation; but as that was often the case with madness itself, it excited no remark.

The state of Eleanor's mind when these awful tidings were communicated to her, which they were by her father, in his agitation and anger, without the least preparation, we leave our readers to imagine. Hardened, heartless, wilful as she was, she was still a woman, and a very young one, and till Captain Fortescue appeared, had loved, as far as it was in her nature, Lord Fitzclair. To believe that she had nothing to do with his miserable end was an attempt so vain and hollow, that even she shrunk from the hopeless struggle to realize it; remorse in all its torturing, unmitigated anguish took possession of her, but instead of leading her to penitence, and thence the hope of peace, it urged her to a course of action from which she imagined there was no withdrawing, and which must in time, by removing her from all painful associations, lessen her present misery.

For three days and nights she never quitted her own apartment, and then joined her usual circles without the smallest evidence of the internal agony which was

still hers. It was very easy to displace paleness by artificial roses, and her gay smiles and joyous sallies were tempered only by a judiciously-expressed horror when the late event was discussed before her, supposed natural to one who had known him so intimately; but the hours of loneliness which followed this conduct in society were terrible indeed. By a strange contrariety of feeling, her better nature longed for Emmeline, and her artificial, which had, alas! only too forcibly become her natural self, felt as if she would leave the kingdom rather than encounter the mild, sorrowful glance of those penetrating eyes.

Lord Delmont was himself in a most pitiable condition; even minor evils had always been great to him, and the effect of this, the wish to take Eleanor away from Captain Fortescue's increased and annoying attentions, and yet the dread that doing so would connect her with Fitzclair's death, so distracted him as to render him really ill—information which instantly brought Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton to Cheltenham.

Some young wives and mothers might have felt it hard that their domestic enjoyment should so continually have been disturbed and annoyed from the faults of others; but Emmeline had been accustomed to trace everything that created personal suffering to the highest source, and feel that it was good for her, or it would not be; a conviction that enabled her to bear with and still to love the erring one that was the visible cause of pain.

Eleanor was at a gay ball the night of her arrival, and Mrs. Hamilton requested she might not be informed of it till the following day. About half an hour before

her usual hour of rising after such scenes, she entered her sister's room. All around her lay the ornaments of the previous evening, looking so strange, gaudy, and faded in the darkened room, and judged by the calmer feelings of the morning. A sensation of intense depression crept over Emmeline as she gazed, increasing as she looked on the face of the sleeper, which, divested of its unnatural bloom, looked so fearfully wan and haggard. Her beautiful hair lay in tangled masses on her damp brow, and as Emmeline gently tried to remove it, Eleanor started and awoke.

"Is it already time to get up?" she said, languidly, and only half unclosing her eyes; "I feel as if I had not slept at all. Am I dreaming?" she added, starting up, "or have I slept in one place and woke in another? Am I at Oakwood?"

"No, dearest Eleanor; will you not welcome me to Malvern House?"

The voice, the look seemed to thrill through her; her temples were throbbing, her heart weighed down, as it always was when she first awoke, with an undefinable sense of guilt and pain; she tried to be cold, proud, reserved, but it would not do, and she suddenly flung her arms round her sister's neck, and burst into agonized tears.

It was a most unexpected greeting, and Mrs. Hamilton argued hopefully from it. Alas! the unwonted softening only lasted one brief half hour. She left her at Eleanor's entreaty while dressing, and when she returned, though the reckless girl told her, with a half smile, she was ready for her lecture, for she could only have come from Oakwood to give her one, and that how-

ever severe her words might be, she could not alter her tone, that must be kind, in spite of herself. Yet Emmeline could not succeed in convincing her how wrongly, how cruelly she had acted. Eleanor would persist that she was not in the least to blame, and that poor Fitzclair's fearful end was only owing to his own violent passions, in fact, that he must have been out of his mind, and that, though it was certainly very dreadful, she had perhaps escaped a very terrible doom; but speak as she might, Emmeline was not deceived as to the agony she was actually enduring. Finding, however, that all her gentle arguments were useless, that even the perusal of Fitzclair's brief lines to her husband,—which Eleanor insisted on seeing, and in which he deplored his madness in not having followed his advice, and flown from her presence, and bade him take his forgiveness to her, and say, that the means he had adopted would, he trusted, dissolve their engagement to her satisfaction,—had no effect, save in causing her to turn so deadly pale, that her sister was convinced nothing but an almost supernatural effort of pride preserved her from fainting. She desisted; hoping against hope that Eleanor would yet repent and become a different being. She knew harshness would only harden, and so she tried to prevail on her father to treat her as usual, but this Lord Delmont could not do. It is strange how often we find those parents who have been over-indulgent to childhood unusually harsh to the faults of youth. Weak characters, also, when driven to anger, are always more violent than firmer ones; and, certainly, Eleanor's continued haughtiness and coldness, as if she were the injured one, did not tend to calm him.

And his angry feelings were unfortunately but too soon aggravated by a proposal in form from Captain Fortescue for the hand of Eleanor. Without a moment's delay, he despatched a decided and almost insulting refusal to the young soldier, and then sought his daughter, and vented on her the anger and vexation which overpowered him, upbraiding her not only with the death of Fitzclair, but for having dared so to encourage young Fortescue as to give him courage for his audacious proposal. To his astonishment, he was heard without any attempt at reply; but he would have been startled, could he have seen the pallid cheek, compressed lip, and clenched hand with which, when he had left her, Eleanor muttered—

“Father, if it be sin to leave you, be it on your own head. I would have wedded with your consent, had you permitted it; but now my destiny is fixed. There is no peace in England: at least let me be spared the agony of breaking another loving heart.”

Nearly three weeks rolled on, and Eleanor's extraordinary submission, and even in some degree withdrawal from society (for which Mrs. Hamilton's arrival was a good excuse), caused her father's irritation against her almost entirely to subside. That she passed several hours each day apart from her sister excited no surprise. Emmeline was thankful even for her change of deportment, but nothing confidential ever again passed between them. That reports were floating about, connecting the names of Miss Manvers and the late Lord Fitzclair, seemed little heeded by Eleanor, though they caused natural vexation to her family. About this time an invitation arrived for

Eleanor from a lady of rank, slightly known to her father, and living ten miles from Cheltenham in a beautiful villa, at which she expected a select party of fashionables to ruralise for a week or two. There was nothing in the note to excite the dread that weighed on Mrs. Hamilton's spirits, as Eleanor carelessly threw it to her for her perusal, but she would not express it, as Lord Delmont seemed inclined that Eleanor should accept it, knowing that the lady was much too exclusive for Captain Fortescue to join her guests, and believing that Eleanor's apparent indifference to the visit originated from that cause. Telling her, he was so gratified by her having devoted so many evenings to her sister, he added, she had his full consent to go if she liked, as he could better spare her then than when Emmeline returned to Oakwood. She quietly thanked him, but evinced no particular pleasure.

The day before her intended departure, the sisters were sitting together, and little Percy, who now ran firmly without any falls, was playing about the room. He had already displayed a high spirit and passionate temper, with their general accompaniment, self-will, even in trifles, that Mrs. Hamilton felt would render her task a trying one; but she was as firm as she was gentle, and faced the pain of contradicting her darling bravely:—

"Do not touch that, Percy, love," she said, as her little boy stretched out his hand towards a beautiful but fragile toy, that stood with other nick-nacks on a low table. The child looked laughingly and archly towards her and withdrew his hand, but did not move from the table.

"Come here, Percy, you have not played with these pretty things for a long time;" and she took from her work-box some gaily coloured ivory balls, which had been his favorite playthings, but just at present they had lost their charm, and the young gentleman did not move.

Mrs. Hamilton knelt down by him, and said quietly :

"My Percy will not disobey Mamma, will he?"

"Me want that;" he replied, in the pretty coaxing tone of infancy; and he twined his little round arms caressingly round her neck.

Mrs. Hamilton felt very much tempted to indulge him, but she resisted it.

"But that is not a fit plaything for you, love; besides, it is not mine, and we must not touch what is not ours. Come and see if we cannot find something just as pretty, that you may have."

And after some minutes' merry play in her lap his mother hoped he had forgotten it; but the little gentleman was not, he thought, to be so governed. The forbidden plaything was quietly grasped, and he seated himself on the ground in silent but triumphant glee.

Surprised at his sudden silence, Mrs. Hamilton looked towards him. It was his first act of decided disobedience, and she knew she must not waver. Young as he was, he had already learned to know when she was displeased, and when she desired him very gravely to give her the toy, he passionately threw it down, and burst into a violent fit of crying. His nurse took

him struggling from the room, and Mrs. Hamilton quietly resumed her work; but there was such an expression of pain in her countenance, that Eleanor exclaimed,

"Emmeline! I have been watching you for the last half hour, and I cannot comprehend you. Do explain yourself."

"I will if I can;" and Mrs. Hamilton looked up and smiled.

"Why would you not let that poor little Percy have that toy?"

"Because it would have been encouraging his touching or taking everything he sees, whether proper for him or not."

"But he could not understand that."

"Not now, perhaps; but I wish him to know that when I speak, he must obey me. It is, I think, a mistaken doctrine, that we ought to give children a *reason* for all we desire them to do. Obedience can then never be prompt, as it ought to be. And in fact, if we wait until they are old enough to understand the reasons for a command, the task will be much more difficult, from the ascendancy which wilfulness may already have obtained."

"But then why were you so cruel as to send the poor child upstairs? Was it not enough to take the toy from him?"

"Not quite, for him to remember that he must not touch it again."

"And do you really think he will not?"

"I can only hope so, Eleanor; but I must not be

disheartened if he do. He is an infant still, and I cannot expect him to learn such a difficult lesson as obedience in one, two, or six lessons."

"And will he love you as much as if you had given it to him?"

"Not at the moment, perhaps, but when he is older he will love me more. And it is that hope which reconciles me to the pain which refusing to indulge him costs me now."

"And voluntarily you will bear the pain which had almost brought tears into the eyes of the severe and stoical Mrs. Hamilton!" exclaimed Eleanor.

"It was a foolish weakness, my dear Eleanor, for which my husband would have chidden me; but there must be pain to a mother if called upon to exert authority, when inclination so strongly points to indulgence."

"Well, if ever I have anything to do with children, I certainly shall not be half as particular as you are, Emmeline. I really cannot imagine what harm gratifying myself and Percy could possibly have done."

"If ever you have children, my dear Eleanor, may you have strength of mind and self-control sufficient to forget self, and refuse the gratification of the present moment for the welfare of future years!"

Mrs. Hamilton spoke impressively, and something, either in her words or tone, caused the blood to rush into Eleanor's cheeks, and she hastily walked to the window, then, as abruptly returning, she kissed her sister, a very rare token of affection, and declaring she was much too good for her to understand, quitted the room.

The following day, dressed for her visit, and only waiting for the carriage, Eleanor, accompanied by Mrs. Hamilton and her little boys, entered the same apartment. Though not in general fond of nursing, Eleanor had taken Herbert in her arms, and was playing with him with unusual fondness; Percy, who had not seen the tempting plaything since his banishment the preceding day, the moment his eye caught it, to the astonishment of Eleanor, ran up to his mother, and lisping forth, "Me no touch that—Percy good boy now," held up his little face lovingly to hers, and with a very pardonable feeling of delight, Mrs. Hamilton lifted him up and covered him with kisses. The feelings which thrilled through Eleanor at that moment she might indeed have found it difficult to explain, but she was so conscious of a change of countenance as to hide her face on Herbert's head. It might have been obedience and disobedience brought so suddenly and strangely in contrast—and who were the actors? an infant and herself. For a minute she recovered, stricken with sudden and agonized remorse; but it was too late, she ad gone too far, and the announcement of the carriage was a relief from that bitter moment of painful indecision. Placing her baby nephew in his nurse's arms, she said, caressingly, "Will not Percy give Lina some of those kisses as well as mamma?" The child threw one little arm round her neck, and the other round that of his mother, and then burst into a merry laugh at thus seeing himself as it were a link between them. Never had it seemed to Eleanor that she had loved and admired her sister as she did at that moment; all the

neglect, unkindness, she had shown her, all the sarcasm and satire, of which, either before or behind her, she had so often made her the victim, combined with an intense, but how painfully vain, longing to have resembled her in the remotest degree, rather than be the character which had never before appeared so degraded, so hateful—almost overpowered her—a convulsive sob escaped her as she clasped Emmeline in a close embrace, and almost choked her hurried good-bye! Lord Delmont and Mr Hamilton were in the hall, and the former was surprised and delighted at the warmth with which his usually reckless child returned his kiss and farewell; the carriage drove off leaving unusual hope and cheerfulness behind it. Alas! in one short fortnight every rising hope was blighted, Emmeline's momentary dread fulfilled, and Lord Delmont experiencing in all its agony,

“How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child!”

CHAPTER V.

A HEART AND A HOME IN ENGLAND.—A HEART AND
A HOME IN INDIA.

FROM the moment Arthur Hamilton returned to Cheltenham, with the painful intelligence that he had arrived at Leith only in time to witness the departure of the beautiful vessel which contained Captain Fortescue and the exquisitely lovely bride who had, it seemed, turned the heads of all the usually quiet Scotsmen who had seen her, Lord Delmont gradually sunk. The agony of losing her for ever—for so he regarded her departure for and residence in India for an indeterminate time—conquered every other feeling. Her conduct had caused emotions of anguish far too deep for the relieving sensation of anger. The name of the lady from whose house and by whose connivance she had eloped he was never heard to breathe; but, if ever casually mentioned before him, every feature would become convulsed, and he would instantly leave the room. Often and often he accused his own harshness as the cause of driving her from him, and then came with overwhelming bitterness the thought that if he lately had been harsh, surely the recollection of all the indulgent fondness he had shown demanded some gratitude in return. If she had but written, had but expressed one wish for his continued love, one regret

for his present pain! but no letter came, and the contending but all-depressing emotions so completely undermined a constitution never very strong, and already worn by care, that when another and still heavier trial came, he sunk at once beneath it.

Though Eleanor had been his favorite, his feelings of pride and hope had greatly centred in his son, whose career in five years' active service on board a man-of-war, had been such as to raise him already to a lieutenancy, and excite every gratifying emotion, not only in his immediate family, but in a large circle of admiring friends. Mrs. Hamilton's love for her brother had naturally increased, strong as it always had been, even in childhood,—and the visits which Charles had been enabled to make to Oakwood, brief in duration as they were compelled to be, had always been fraught with heartfelt joyous happiness, not only to herself but to her husband. The pain and anxiety attendant on Eleanor's elopement, and the dread of its effects on Lord Delmont, had for two or three months been the sole subject of thought; but at length, and, like a fearful flash bringing a new sorrow to light, it pressed upon them that it was long after the period that intelligence of Charles ought to have been received. Still hoping against hope, not only the Delmont family, but all who had friends and relatives on board the *Leander*, imagined that she might have drifted from her course, or been engaged on some secret and distant expedition, but that intelligence concerning her would and must soon come. Alas! after months of agonizing suspense, information was received that several planks and masts, bearing evidence of fire as well as water, and some sea-chests, bearing names, only

too soon recognized as those of some of the Leander's crew, had been cast off the coast of Barbary, and there could be no more doubt that death or slavery—that fearful slavery which the bombardment of Algiers had so displayed to European eyes—was the portion of all those beloved ones, for whom so many aching hearts and eyes had watched and wept in vain. It was a trial so terrible, that Mrs. Hamilton felt at first as if even submission had departed from her; and she could almost have rebelled in spirit against the inscrutable decree, that had consigned one so free from vice and evil, so full of happiness and worth, to a doom so terrible. Much as she had loved and revered her husband before, she seemed never to have felt his worth and tenderness till then. It was his sympathy, his strength, that recalled her to a sense of her duty, and gave her power to endure, by a realization once more of that submissiveness to a Father's will, which had never before failed her. But time, though it softened the first anguish, had no power over the memories of this idolized brother, not even when the increasing cares and joys of maternity so fully engrossed her, that the present and the future of her children appeared to have banished all of her own past.

Lord Delmont did not survive the mournful tidings of the certain wreck of the Leander above two months; but his released spirit did not meet that of his son. Charles was not dead. He toiled as a slave long years in living death before there was even a partial amelioration of his sufferings. But as no tidings of him ever came, a young child of three years old, a distant branch of the Manvers family, became Lord Delmont.

Years rolled on, and Mrs. Hamilton's lot was so full

of tranquil happiness, so fraught with the innumerable daily joys of a loving wife and devoted mother, that her prayer was ever rising for guidance, and gratitude, that prosperity might not unfit her for the dark days of trial and adversity, when they should come. That she had cares as well as joys could not be otherwise, when so intensely anxious to bring up her children with more regard to their spiritual and moral welfare, than even the cultivation of their intellect. She was one of those who thought still more of the training of the heart than of the mind, believing that were the first properly awakened, the latter would need little incitement to exertion. Two girls had been the sole addition to her family.

One other wish, and one of many years' standing, Mrs. Hamilton had it in her power to fulfil. From childhood she had been accustomed to think of Lucy Harcourt as one, to whom it might one day be in her power to return the heavy debt of gratitude she owed her mother; she had been accustomed to correspond with her from very early years, Mrs. Harcourt delighting in creating a mutual interest between her pupil and the child from whom circumstances had so sadly separated her. When therefore an event of a very painful nature to Miss Harcourt's individual feelings compelled her, as the only hope of regaining peace, and strengthening her for the arduous duty of instruction, which she knew, as a single woman, was her sole source of independent subsistence, she had no scruple in accepting that friendship which Mrs. Hamilton had so warmly proffered. A very few days of personal intercourse sufficed for mutual conviction—that correspondence had

not deceived in the favorable impressions of either. Miss Harcourt found, indeed, the friend her aching spirit needed; and Mrs. Hamilton, long before the months of repose which she had insisted should forestall the commencement of exertion were over, rejoiced in the conviction that the daughter of her beloved and regretted friend was indeed well-fitted for that position in her family, her helper in the moral and intellectual training of her daughters, which her vivid fancy had often pictured as so filled. They were indeed but infants when Miss Harcourt arrived; but Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton found means to overrule the honorable scruples which, on the part of Lucy, seemed at first against their plan, and in her gradually returning health and peace, Mrs. Hamilton not only rejoiced but felt gratefully thankful that the wish of so many years' standing, and which had seemed so little likely to be fulfilled, was absolutely accomplished, and she could prove how deeply she had loved and mourned her truly maternal friend. It is astonishing how often, if an earnest heartfelt desire for the gratification of some good feeling or for the performance of some good deed be steadily and unvaryingly held before us, without any regard to its apparent impossibility, its accomplishment is at length obtained. It is supposed to be only done so in books, but this is a mistaken supposition, arising from the simple fact of individuals so often forgetting their own past, and failing steadily to pursue one object, regardless of the lapse of years. If they looked into themselves more often and more carefully, if they sought consistency in desire and pursuit, they would often be startled at their connexion, and that it is not so useless to *wish*

and *seek*, when both are of such nature as can be based on and strengthened by prayer, as it may seem. Human life presents as many startling connexions and contingencies as romance—only, as the *actors*, not the *observers* of this world's busy scene, we cannot trace them as we do in books.

The thought of Eleanor was the only dark shade in Mrs. Hamilton's life. She had written to her often, but communication with India was not then what it is now, and her letters might not have reached their destination; especially, as being in active service, Captain Fortescue was himself constantly changing his quarters. Whatever the cause (for Eleanor's letters, Mrs. Hamilton thought, might also have miscarried), she heard nothing of her till the hurried epistle commenced by her sister, and finished by Mr. Myrvin, brought the startling intelligence that she was a widow and dying, unable to reach Oakwood, where she had hoped, at least, to have sufficient strength to bring her children, and implore for them protection and love, and conjuring Mrs. Hamilton to come to her without delay. The letter, imperfectly directed, had been days on its journey, and it was with the most melancholy forebodings Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had started for Llangwillan.

But though it was not till many years after Edward and Ellen Fortescue became inmates of her family that Mrs. Hamilton became acquainted with all the particulars of their childhood, it is necessary that our readers should be rather more enlightened; otherwise the character of Ellen may be to them as unnatural and as incomprehensible as it was to her aunt.

That Eleanor could realize true happiness in a marriage entered into only because she could not bear the torture of her own thoughts, and her constant dread of the world's contumely, was not likely. At first, indeed, it was a very delightful thing to find herself the object, not only of devotion to her husband (whom, could she entirely have forgotten Fitzclair, she might have really loved), but a still more brilliant star in India than she had even been in England. Though Captain Fortescue was often engaged in marches and countermarches, where Eleanor sometimes, though very rarely, accompanied him, still there were intervals of rest for him in the larger cities, where his wife ever shone pre-eminent. For the first three or four years, the pride he felt in seeing her so universally admired, in the greater attention he received for her sake, compensated for, or concealed the qualities which, as a soldier's wife, he had fondly believed she would possess. But as his health, always delicate, became more and more undermined, and compelled him to relinquish society, at least in a great measure, and to look for the quiet pleasures of domestic life, he found, and bitter was that first awakening, that his wishes, his comfort, were of no importance. She could not resign the pleasures of society—of still being enabled to pursue the dangerous amusement of her girlhood (though so guardedly that not a rumour against her ever found breath), for the dullness of her home. Yet still he loved her; and when Eleanor, with all the fascinating playfulness of her former self, would caress and try to persuade him to go out with her, and not sit moping at home, and that if he would, she would behave

just as he liked, and if he did not care to see her surrounded, as she knew she was, by red coats, she would dismiss them all, and devote herself to him—but indeed she could not stay at home,—he would feel that it would be cruel indeed to chain such a being to his side, and sometimes make the exertion (for which he was little fitted) to accompany her; at others, with kind words and indulgent love, permit her to follow her own wishes, and remain alone. But little did he think the real reason that Eleanor could not rest in quiet at home. The recollection of Lord Fitzclair was at such times so fearfully vivid; that the very agony she had endured when first told of his fearful end would return in all its intensity; the thought, had her father really cursed her for her disobedience, and was it that for ever hovering round her, preventing anything like lasting happiness. And yet, by a strange contradiction, while the idea of her father's curse shook her whole frame at times with convulsive sobs, pride, that most fatal ingredient of her character, utterly prevented all attempt on her part to communicate with her relations. She said, as they had made no effort to conciliate, she would not; and yet the longing for Emmeline sometimes became actually painful.

Eleanor was never intended for the heartless, reckless being she had tried to become. It was a constant and most terrible struggle between the good and evil parts of her nature, and though the evil triumphed—in the determination that nothing should change her course of action, nothing compel her to acknowledge she had ever been in the wrong, and was really not

the perfect creature which flattery was ever ready to pour into her ear,—the good had yet so much power as to make her miserable, by the conviction, that she was not what she might have been,—that she never could be happy,—that every pleasure was hollow, every amusement vain. Again and again the memories of Emmeline's gentle, sustaining, ever active piety would come before her, as if beseeching her to seek the only fount of peace; but so terrible was the self-reproach, the anguish which the thought called, that she always turned from it with a shudder, resolved that religion was never meant for such as herself, and that its restrictions should never enter her mind, or its dictates pass her lips.

With the awakening intelligence of her son, however, there seemed one pleasure not wholly hollow—one enjoyment without the shadow of alloy; and she grasped it with an avidity and a constancy, that in a character generally so wavering and inconsistent was almost incredible. That her son was from his earliest infancy the image of herself, might have added strength to the feeling; but the intense love, almost idolatry, she felt towards him, increasing with his growth, did much towards banishing the unpleasant feelings of remorse and home sickness. She devoted herself to her boy, not judiciously indeed, for she was not one to practise self-denial in education; and as Edward's disposition was not one to cause her annoyance, even from over-indulgence, there was not even the check of his ill-temper or rudeness towards herself, to whisper the fearful evil she was engendering.

What was the emotion which had so riveted her to

her son, it might have been difficult to ascertain ; it could scarcely have been the mere instinct of maternity, for then it would have extended to her daughter ; but as complete as was her indulgence to Edward, so was her neglect of Ellen.

Colonel Fortescue (for he had gradually attained that rank) had borne without complaint neglect of himself ; nay, it had not had power in the least degree to diminish his love, though it might have awakened him to the consciousness that his wife was indeed not perfect. Her devotion to Edward, even undertaking the toilsome task of instruction, had delighted him, for at first having been much from home, he was not conscious of the lonely fate of his little girl ; but when the truth became evident, that she was an object almost of dislike—that she was left entirely to the tender mercies of a hireling, and Eleanor only alluded to her, to contrast her peevishness and stupidity with Edward's happiness and intellect, all the father was roused within him, and, for the first time, he felt and expressed serious displeasure. He acknowledged that his son might, indeed, be the superior in beauty and talent, but he would not allow that Ellen's affections were less warm, or her temper less capable of guidance. To him, and to all who had in the least attended to childhood, Ellen's face, even from infancy, expressed not ill-temper but suffering. Continually ill, for she inherited her father's constitution, the poor little infant was constantly crying or fretful ; which Eleanor, never having known what illness was, attributed at once to a naturally evil temper which annoyed her. The nurse, as ignorant as she was

obsequious, adopted the same opinion ; and, before she was even three years old, harshness, both by nurse and mother, had been constantly used, to make Ellen as good a child as her brother.

In vain did the Colonel, when he became aware of this treatment, remonstrate that it was the illness of the poor child,—neither obstinacy nor ill-temper : his wife would not understand him, and at length he sternly and peremptorily declared, that as she had her will with Edward, he would have his with Ellen, and that no chastisement should be inflicted. If she did wrong, he was to be told of it, and if necessary he would reprove her, but he would allow no other interference. Mrs. Fortescue made not the least objection, believing that as her husband had thus taken her in charge, she was exonerated from all blame if she left her entirely to him.

Only too quickly did the poor child discover that the lovely being whom she called mother, and whom she loved so fondly, had no love, no caress, for her. Repeated punishment, though it had only extended to her fifth year, had completely crushed the gentle tender spirit, that had required such judicious nursing ; and combined with physical suffering, instead of deadening the feelings, as in some dispositions it would have done, had rendered them morbidly acute—an effect which constant loneliness naturally deepened. Her father's love and caresses had caused her to cling to him so passionately, that every word he said, every request he made her, was treasured and thought upon, when he was away from her, with a tenacity many would have fancied unnatural in a child. He taught

her, though his heart often bled as he did so, (for what claim had her mother upon the feelings he sought to inculcate,) to love, honour, and obey her mother in all things; that if she did so, she would be as happy as Edward in time, and Ellen, though she did not understand him, obeyed; but Colonel Fortescue little imagined the evil which was accruing from these very natural lessons.

Ellen learned to believe that as her mother never noticed her, except in accents of anger or irritation, it must be her own fault. She longed to be beautiful and buoyant as Edward; and that she was neither, marked her in her own young mind as so inferior, it was no wonder her mother could not caress or love her. Had Edward presumed on his favoritism, and been unkind or neglectful, she might perhaps have envied more than she loved him; but his disposition was naturally so noble, so open-hearted, so generous, that he always treated her with affection, and would share with her his playthings and sweets, even while he could not but believe her in all things his inferior; and that as such, of course, her wishes could never cross with his,—poor child, she scarcely knew what it was to wish, except that she might cling to her mother as she did to her father, and that she could but be good and beautiful enough to win her love! The lesson of concealment of every feeling is but too easily and too early learned. Tears do not flow even from childhood, when always rudely checked and angrily reproved. Affection cannot display itself unless called forth, and so the very outward seeming of children is more in a parent's hand than mere superficial

observers may believe: and Mrs. Fortescue blamed and disliked the cold inanimate exterior which she had never tried to warm.

Ellen's extreme difficulty in acquiring knowledge, compared with Edward's extraordinary quickness, only confirmed her painful conviction of her great inferiority, the impossibility of her ever winning love,—and the consequent increased intensity of her affection for her father and brother, who loved her notwithstanding. That the child herself could not have defined these sensations is true; but that they had existence, even before she was nine years old, and that they influenced many years of her after-life, causing error and suffering, and rendering Mrs. Hamilton's task one of pain and difficulty, before these mistaken influences could be eradicated, is equally so. The power over early years is so immense, its responsibility so extensive, that its neglect or abuse may indeed make the earnest thinker tremble; less, perhaps, for the actual amount of general evil, for that circumstances in after life are sometimes graciously permitted to avert, but for individual suffering and individual joy,—and especially is this the case in the training of girls. More enduring in their very fragility than boys, they may be compared to those precious metals which fire and water and pressure have no power to break, but simply to draw out to a thinner and thinner thread, dwindling more and more, but to its last spider-woven fineness capable of tenuity and vitality. While boys, like men, are often crushed at once—the frame of the one and the spirit of the other equally unable to endure.

CHAPTER VI.

DOMESTIC DISCORD AND ITS END.

THE displeasure of her husband, his reproaches for her conduct to Ellen, by causing some degree of annoyance, increased Mrs. Fortescue's feelings of dislike towards the object who had caused it, and this was soon afterwards heightened by self-reproach.

A malignant fever broke out in the British settlement where Colonel Fortescue was stationed, his wife and children were with him, and, dreadfully alarmed, Eleanor determined to remove with her children to some less unhealthy spot. The Colonel willingly consented; but before their hasty preparations were concluded Ellen sickened. Alarm for Edward, however, so engrossed the mother, that she appeared incapable of any other thought. In vain Colonel Fortescue urged that his son would be safe with the friends who had promised to take charge of him, and who were on the point of leaving the city. That there were none on whom he could depend so to tend the little sufferer as not to require a guiding head, and she knew how impossible it was for him to be with his child as his heart prompted. He urged, entreated, commanded in vain, Mrs. Fortescue was inexorable. She declared that the idea of her son being away from her at such a time

would drive her mad; and as for duty, one child demanded her care as much as another. That her husband might not care about thus exposing her to infection, but she really thought, for Edward's sake, it was her duty to take care of herself. It might be nothing to the Colonel or Ellen whether she lived or died, but to Edward it was a great deal; and so as she must choose between them, she would go with him who loved her best, and who would be miserable without her. The haughty angry tone with which she spoke, the unjust taunt, roused every indignant feeling, and Colonel Fortescue said more in that moment of irritation than he could have believed possible. But it only awakened the cold sustaining pride which Eleanor always called to her aid when conscience smote her, and she departed with her son, hardening every better feeling and rousing anger against her husband and child to conquer the suffering of self-reproach. But when many miles from the city of death, and there were no fears for Edward, anxiety and wretchedness so assailed her, that pride itself gave way. To communicate with the infected city was difficult, and very infrequent, and again and again did she wish that she had remained.

During the continuance of Ellen's illness her father's anguish was indeed terrible. Every leisure moment he spent by her side, moistening her parched lips, bathing her burning forehead, and listening to the plaintive accents of delirium with an acuteness of suffering, that injured his own health more than he had the least idea of. The attendants were really both kind and skilful, but the Colonel fancied, when he was not with her, she was neglected and in still

greater suffering; and the struggle between his duties and his child was almost more than he could bear. He had never been a religious man—never known what it was to pray, except in the public services of his regiment, but now prayer, earnest, heartfelt, poured from him, and the thankfulness to God, which so overpowered him, when she was pronounced out of danger, as to compel him to weep like a child, planted a sense of a Father's infinite love and infinite compassion within him, which was his sole sustainer the short remainder of his life.

Eleanor's letters, few as they were, had in some degree softened his anger towards her; but as he beheld the ravages of disease on his poor child's face and form, rendering her still less attractive than she had been, and perceived that bodily weakness had extended to her mind, and often and often forced tears from her eyes and momentary complainings, he trembled lest Eleanor should find still more to dislike and reprove; and often his heart bled as Ellen would ask with tears, for her dear mamma, adding, plaintively,—“Mamma never kisses me or loves me as she does Edward; but I like to be near her, and look at her dear beautiful face, and wish I was good and pretty enough for her to love me. Why does she never come to me?—and why may I not go to her?”

And what could the Colonel reply, except that her mother feared Edward would take the infection, and therefore she was obliged to go with him to some place of safety? And his child was satisfied, repeating so fondly her delight that her dear, dear Edward had been saved from being as ill as she was, that her

father clasped her closer and closer to his heart, feeling the intrinsic beauty of a disposition that, instead of repining that she was left alone to suffer, could rejoice that her brother had been spared.

Colonel Fortescue obtained a few weeks' leave, that he might take his child to the sea-side as recommended, ere she joined her mother. And alone with him, gradually regaining a moderate degree of strength, Ellen was very happy; but such bright intervals were indeed few and far between. There was no change in her mother's conduct towards her, when reunited. Her heart had, indeed, risen to her lips as she again beheld the child so nearly lost; and had she followed impulse, she would have clasped her in her arms and wept over her, but that would have seemed tacitly to acknowledge that she had been wrong, and had suffered from it; and so she refrained, causing suffering to herself, anguish to her child, and pain to her husband, all from that fell demon pride. She only chose to remember that it was Ellen who had been the cause of her husband's anger—Ellen, the constant subject of contention between them—Ellen, always causing the pang of self-reproach: and so how was it possible that she could love her?

About a year after Ellen's dangerous illness, when she was nearly ten, and Edward just eleven, Colonel Fortescue was ordered to take the command of some troops to be stationed at a fort, whose vicinity to some hostile natives rendered it rather a post of danger. The wives and children of the officers were permitted to accompany them, if they wished it, and, except in the Colonel's own family, there had been no hesitation

in their choice. The Colonel was strangely and painfully depressed as with some vague dread, and all his affection for his wife had returned with such force as to make him shrink in unusual suffering from the idea of leaving her ; and conquering reluctance, for he felt as if she would not accede, he implored her to accompany him, confessing he felt ill and unhappy, and shrank from a separation. His wife looked at him with astonishment ; he had never asked nor thought of such a thing before, she said, in their many brief partings, and she really could not understand him. The place was decidedly unhealthy, and Edward must not be exposed to its malaria ; besides which, she had promised him to go to a juvenile ball, which was given by an English family of rank in a fortnight's time, and she could not possibly disappoint him ; and why her husband should wish for her in such a place she could not imagine, but she knew she should die of terror before she had been there a week. Not a word did the Colonel utter in reply, but he felt as if an ice-bolt had struck his heart and frozen it at once. He fixed his eyes upon her, with a strange, sad, reproaching look, which haunted her till her death, and turning from her, sought the room where Ellen was preparing her lessons for the joyful hour when he could attend to her. As she sprung towards him with a cry of glee, he clasped her to his bosom without the power of uttering a sound, save a groan so deep and hollow, the child's unusual glee was checked, and she clung to him in terror ; and when he could tell her that he was about to leave her, and for an indefinite

time, her passionate grief seemed almost to comfort him, by its strong evidence of her childish love.

"Let me go with you, Papa, dear Papa? oh! I will be so good—I will not give you any trouble, indeed, indeed I will not. Pray, pray, take me with you, dear, dear Papa?" And she looked in his face so beseechingly, that the Colonel had no strength to resist, and fondly kissing her, he promised that if Mrs. Cameron would permit her to join her little family, she should go with him: and, to Ellen's intense thankfulness, the permission was willingly accorded.

Mrs. Fortescue had indeed replied, when her husband briefly imparted his intention, that he certainly must intend Ellen to be ill again, by exposing her to such an unhealthy climate; and that if she were, he must not be angry if she refused to go and nurse her, as it would be all his weak indulgence, and no fault of hers. The Colonel made no answer, and irritated beyond measure at his manner, Eleanor parted from her husband in coldness and in pride.

The fortnight passed, and Mrs. Fortescue felt as if her own youth were indeed renewed, the longings for universal admiration again her own; but now it was only for her son, and her triumph was complete; many and lovely were the youthful beings called together on that festive night, seeming as if England had concentrated her fairest and purest offspring in that far distant land; but Edward, and his still lovely mother, outshone them all. That she was herself admired as much, if not more, than she had ever been in her palmy days of triumph, Eleanor scarcely knew; her every

feeling was centred in her boy, and consequently the supercilious haughtiness which had so often marred her beauty in former days was entirely laid aside, and maternal pride and pleasure gratified to the utmost, added a new charm to her every movement and every word. She heard the universal burst of admiration which greeted her, as to oblige Edward she went through a quadrille with him, and never in her whole career had she felt so triumphant, so proud, so joyous. During the past fortnight she had often been tormented by self-reproach, and her husband's look had disagreeably haunted her; but this night not a fleeting thought of either the Colonel or Ellen entered her mind, and her pleasure was complete.

Tired with dancing, and rather oppressed with the heat, Eleanor quitted the crowded ball-room, and stood for a few minutes quite alone in a solitary part of the verandah which, covered with lovely flowers, ran round the house. The music in the ball-room sounded in the distance as if borne by the night breeze in softened harmony over the distant hills. The moon was at the full, and lit up nearly the whole garden with the refulgence of a milder day. At that moment a cold chill crept over the heart and frame of Eleanor, causing her breath to come thick and gaspingly. Why she knew not, for there was nothing visible to cause it, save that, in one part of the garden, a cluster of dark shrubs, only partly illumined by the rays of the moon, seemed suddenly to have assumed the shape of a funeral bier, covered with a military pall. At the same moment the music in the ball-room seemed changed to the low

wailing plaint and muffled drums, the military homage to some mighty dead. And if it were indeed but excited fancy, it had a strange effect, for Eleanor fainted on the marble floor.

That same afternoon Colonel Fortescue, with some picked men, had set off to discover the track of some marauding natives, who for some days had been observed hovering about the neighbourhood. Military ardour carried him farther than he intended, and it was nearly night, when entering a narrow defile, a large body of the enemy burst upon them, and a desperate contest ensued. The defile was so hemmed in with rock and mountain, that though not very distant from the fort, the noise of the engagement had not been distinguished. Captain Cameron was quietly sitting with his wife and elder children, awaiting without any forebodings the return of the Colonel. Though it was late, Ellen's fears had been so visible, that Mrs. Cameron could not send her to bed; the child seemed so restless and uneasy that the Captain had tried to laugh her out of her cowardice, as he called it, declaring that her father would disown her if she could not be more brave. Hasty footsteps were at length heard approaching, and Ellen started from her seat and sprung forwards, as the door opened; but it was not the Colonel, only a sergeant who had accompanied him, and whose face caused Captain Cameron to exclaim, in alarm, "How now, Sergeant Allen, returned, and alone; what has chanced?"

"The worst those brown devils could have done!" was the energetic reply. "We've beaten them, and we will beat them again, the villains! but that will

not bring *him* back,—Captain—Captain—the colonel's down!"

The Captain started from his chair, but before he could frame another word, Ellen had caught hold of the old man's arm, and wildly exclaimed, "Do you mean—do you mean—pray tell me, Sergeant Allen!—Have the Natives met Papa's troop, and have they fought?—and—is he hurt—is he killed?" The man could not answer her—for her look and tone, he afterwards declared to his comrades, went through his heart, just for all the world like a sabre cut; and for the moment neither Captain nor Mrs. Cameron could address her. The shock seemed to have banished voice from all, save from the poor child principally concerned.

"Stay with me, my dear Ellen!" Mrs. Cameron at length said, advancing to her, as she still stood clinging to the sergeant's arm; "the Captain will go and meet your father, and if he be wounded, we will nurse him together, dearest! Stay with me."

"No, no, no!" was the agonized reply; "let me go to him, he may die before they bring him here, and I shall never feel his kiss or hear him bless me again. He told me he should fall in battle—oh! Mrs. Cameron, pray let me go to him!"

And they who knew all which that father was to his poor Ellen could not resist that appeal. The Sergeant said the Colonel was not dead, but so mortally wounded they feared to move him. It was a fearful scene. Death in its most horrid form was all around her; her little feet were literally deluged in blood, and she frequently stumbled over the dusky forms and mangled

and severed limbs that lay on the grass, but neither sob nor cry escaped her till she beheld her father. His men had removed him from the immediate scene of slaughter, and tried to form a rough pallet of military cloaks, but the ghastly countenance, which the moon's light rendered still more fixed and pallid, the rigidity of his limbs, all seemed to denote they had indeed arrived too late, and that terrible stillness was broken by the convulsed and passionate sobs of the poor child, who flinging herself beside him, besought him only to open his eyes, to look on her once more, to call her his darling, and kiss her once, only once again : and it seemed as if her voice had indeed power for the moment to recall the fluttering soul. The heavy eyes did unclosed, the clenched hand relaxed to try and clasp his child, and he murmured feebly—

“How came you here, my poor darling Ellen? are friends here?—is that Cameron's voice?” The Captain knelt down by him and convulsively pressed his hand, but he could not speak.

“God bless you, Cameron! Take my poor child to her mother—implore her—to—and it is to-night, this very night—she and my boy are happy—and I—and my poor Ellen—” A fearful convulsion choked his voice, but after a little while he tried to speak again—

“My poor child, I have prepared you for this; but I know you must grieve for me. Take my blessing to your brother, tell him to protect—love your mother, darling! she must love you at last—a ring—my left hand—take it to her—oh! how I have loved her—God have mercy on her—on my poor children!” He tried

to press his lips again on Ellen's cheek and brow, but the effort was vain,—and at the very moment Mrs. Fortescue had stood transfixed by some unknown terror, her husband ceased to breathe.

It was long before Ellen rallied from that terrible scene. Even when the fever which followed subsided, and she had been taken, apparently perfectly restored to health, once more to her mother and brother, its recollection so haunted her, that her many lonely hours became fraught with intense suffering. Her imagination, already only too morbid, dwelt again and again upon the minutest particular of that field of horror; not only her father, but the objects which, when her whole heart was wrapped in him, she seemed not even to have seen. The ghastly heaps of dead, the severed limbs, the mangled trunks, the gleaming faces all fixed in the distorted expressions with which they died—the very hollow groans and louder cry of pain which, as she passed through the field, had fallen on her ear unheeded, returned to the poor child's too early awakened fancy so vividly, that often and often it was only a powerful though almost unconscious effort that prevented the scream of fear. Her father's last words were never forgotten; she would not only continue to love her mother because he had desired her to do so, but because *he had so loved her*, and on her first return home this seemed easier than ever to accomplish. Mrs. Fortescue, tortured by remorse and grief, had somewhat softened towards the child who had received the last breath of her husband, and could Ellen have overcome the reserve and fear which so many years of estrangement had engendered,

and given vent to the warmth of her nature, Mrs. Fortescue might have learned to know, and knowing, to love her—but it was then too late.

So torturing were Mrs. Fortescue's feelings when she recalled the last request of her husband, and her cruel and haughty refusal; when that which had seemed so important, a juvenile ball—because not to go would disappoint Edward—became associated with his fearful death, and sunk into worse than nothing,—she had parted with him in anger, and it proved for ever;—that even as England had become odious to her, twelve years before, so did India now; and she suddenly resolved to quit it, and return to the relatives she had neglected so long, but towards whom she now yearned more than ever. She thought and believed such a complete change would and must bring peace. Alas! what change will remove the torture of remorse?

Though incapable of real love, from her studied heartlessness, it was impossible for her to have lived twelve years with one so indulgent and fond as Colonel Fortescue, without realizing some degree of affection, and his unexpected and awful death roused every previously dormant feeling so powerfully, that she was astonished at herself, and in her misery believed that the feeling had only come to add to her burden—for what was the use of loving now? and determined to rouse herself, she made every preparation for immediate departure, but she was painfully arrested. The selfish mother had fled from the couch of her suffering child, and now a variation of the same complaint laid her on a bed of pain. It was a desperate struggle between life

and death ; but she rallied, and insisted on taking her passage for England some weeks before her medical attendant thought it advisable. The constant struggle between the whisperings of good and the dominion of evil, which her whole life had been, had unconsciously undermined a constitution naturally good ; and when to this was added a malignant disease, though brief in itself, the seeds of a mortal complaint were planted, which, ere the long voyage was concluded, had obtained fatal and irremediable ascendancy, and occasioned those sufferings and death which in our first chapters we described.

To Edward, though the death of his father had caused him much childish grief, still more perhaps from sympathy with the deep suffering of his mother, than a perfect consciousness of his own heavy loss, the *manner* in which he died was to him a source of actual pride. He had always loved the histories of heroes, military and naval, and gloried in the idea that his father had been one of them, and died as they did, bravely fighting against superior numbers, and in the moment of a glorious victory. He had never seen death, and imagined not all the attendant horrors of such a one ; and how that Ellen could never even hear the word without shuddering he could not understand, nor why she should always so painfully shrink from the remotest reference to that night, which was only associated in his mind with emotions of pleasure. In the tedious voyage of nearly six months (for five and twenty years ago the voyage from India to England was not what it is now,) the character of Edward shone forth in such

noble colouring as almost to excuse his mother's idolatry, and win for him the regard of passengers and crew. Captain Cameron had impressed on his mind that he now stood in his father's place to his mother and sister; and as the idea of protecting is always a strong incentive to manliness in a boy, however youthful, Edward well redeemed the charge, so devoting himself not only to his mother, but to Ellen, that her affection for him redoubled, as did her mistaken idea of his vast superiority.

His taste had always pointed to the naval in preference to the military profession, and the voyage confirmed it. Before he had been a month on board he had become practically an expert sailor—had learned all the technical names of the various parts of a ship, and evinced the most eager desire for the acquirement of navigation. Nor did he fail in the true sailor spirit, when, almost within sight of England, a tremendous storm arose, reducing the vessel almost to a wreck, carrying her far from her destined moorings, and compelling her, after ten days' doubt whether or not she would reach land in safety, to anchor in Milford Haven, there to repair her injuries, ere she could be again seaworthy.

The passengers here left her, and Mrs. Fortescue, whose illness the terrors of the storm had most alarmingly increased, was conveyed to Pembroke in an almost exhausted state; but once on land she rallied, resolved on instantly proceeding to Swansea, then cross to Devonshire, and travel direct to Oakwood, where she had no doubt her sister was. But her temper was destined to be tried still more. The servant

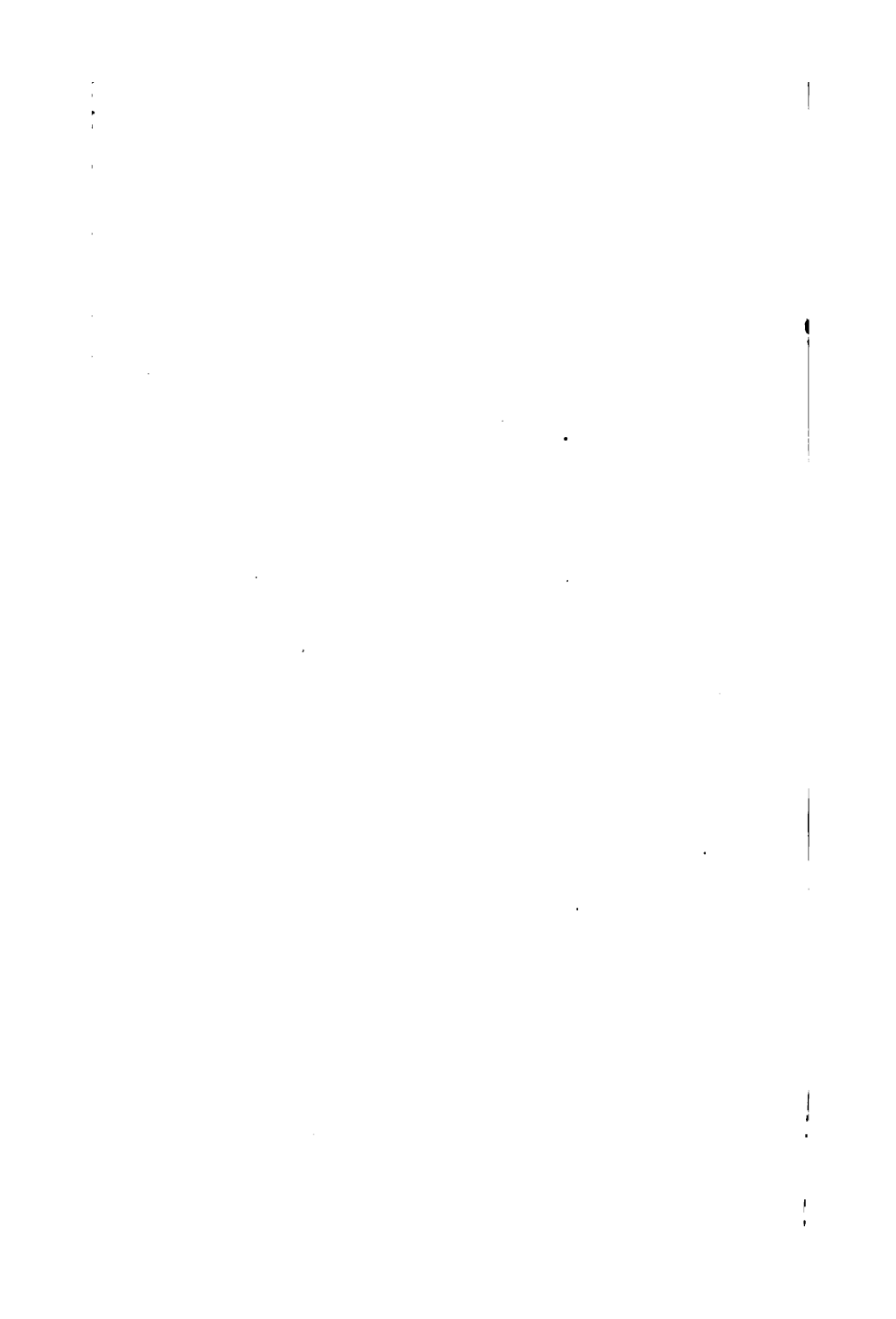
who had accompanied her from India, an English-woman, tired out with the fretful impatience of Mrs. Fortescue during the voyage, and disappointed that she did not at once proceed to London, demanded her instant discharge, as she could not stay any longer from her friends. The visible illness of her mistress might have spared this unfeeling act, but Eleanor had never shown feeling or kindness to her inferiors, and therefore, perhaps, had no right to expect them. Her suppressed anger and annoyance so increased physical suffering, that had it not been for her children she must have sunk at once; but for their sakes she struggled with that deadly exhaustion, and set off the very next morning, without any attendant, for Swansea. They were not above thirty miles from this town when, despite her every effort, Mrs. Fortescue became too ill to proceed. There was no appearance of a town or village, but the owners of a half-way house, pitying the desolate condition of the travellers, directed the postboy to the village of Llangwillan; which, though out of the direct road, and four or five miles distant, was yet the nearest place of shelter. And never in her whole life had Mrs. Fortescue experienced such a blessed sensation of physical relief, as when the benevolent exertions of Mr. Myrvin had installed her in Widow Morgan's humble dwelling, and by means of soothing medicine and deep repose in some degree relieved the torture of a burning brain and aching frame. Still she hoped to rally, and obtain strength sufficient to proceed, and bitter was the anguish when the hope was compelled to be relinquished.—With

all that followed our readers are already acquainted, and we will, therefore, at once seek the acquaintance of Mrs. Hamilton's own family, whose "Traits of Character" will, we hope, illustrate other and happier home influences than those of indiscreet indulgence and culpable neglect.

END OF PART I.

PART II.

TRAITS OF CHARACTER.



CHAPTER I.

YOUTHFUL COLLOQUY—INTRODUCING CHARACTER.

THE curtains were drawn close, the large lamp was on the table, and a cheerful fire blazing in the grate ; for though only September, the room was sufficiently large, and the evenings sufficiently chill, for a fire to add greatly to its aspect of true English comfort. There were many admirable pictures suspended on the walls, and well-filled bookcases, desks, and maps, stands of beautiful flowers, and some ingenious toys, all seeming to proclaim the apartment as the especial possession of the young party who were this evening busily engaged at the large round table which occupied the centre of the room. They were only four in number, but what with a large desk piled with books and some most alarming-sized dictionaries, which occupied the elder of the two lads, the embroidery frame of the elder girl, the dissected map before her sister, and two or three books scattered round the younger boy, the table seemed so well filled, that Miss Harcourt had quietly ensconced herself in her own private little corner, sufficiently near to take an interest, and sometimes join in the conversation of her youthful charge ; but so apart as to be no restraint upon them, and to enable her to pursue her own occupations of either reading, writing, or working uninterruptedly.—Could

poor Mrs. Fortescue have glanced on the happy group, she certainly might have told her sister, with some show of justice, that there was such an equal distribution of interesting and animated expression (which is the great beauty of youth), that she could not have known the trial of having such a heavy, dull, unhappy child as Ellen. Mrs. Hamilton indeed, we rather think would not have considered such a trial, except as it proved ill-health, and physical pain in the little sufferer ; and, perhaps, her increased care and tenderness (for such with her would have been the consequence of the same cause which had created her sister's neglect) might have removed both the depression of constant but impalpable illness, and the expression of heaviness and gloom. Certain it is, her own Herbert had, with regard to delicate health, given her more real and constant anxiety than Eleanor had ever allowed herself to experience with Ellen ; but there was nothing in the boy's peculiarly interesting countenance to denote the physical suffering he very often endured. Care and love had so surrounded his path with blessings, that he was often heard to declare, that he never even wished to be as strong as his brother, or to share his active pleasures, he had so many others equally delightful. Whether it was his physical temperament, inducing a habitude of reflection and studious thought much beyond his years, or whether the unusually gifted mind worked on the frame, or the one combined to form the other, it would be as impossible to decide with regard to him as with hundreds of others like him ; but he certainly seemed, not only to his parents, but to their whole household, and to every one who

casually associated with him, to have more in him of heaven than earth; as if, indeed, he were only lent, not given. And often, and often his mother's heart ached with its very intensity of love, causing the unspoken dread—how might she hope to retain one so faultless, and yet so full of every human sympathy and love! The delicate complexion, beautiful colour of his cheeks and lips, and large, soft, very dark blue eye, with its long black lash, high arched brow, shaded by glossy chesnut hair, were all so lit up with the rays of mind, that though his face returned again and again to the fancy of those who had only once beheld it, they could scarcely have recalled a single feature, feeling only the almost angelic expression of the whole.

His brother, as full of mirth and mischief, and as noisy and laughter-loving as Herbert was quiet and thoughtful, made his way at once, winning regard by storm, and retaining it by his frank and generous qualities, which made him a favorite with young and old. Even in his hours of study, there was not the least evidence of reflection or soberness. As a child he had had much to contend with, in the way of passion, pride, and self-will; but his home influence had been such a judicious blending of indulgence and firmness on the part of both his parents, such a persevering inculcation of a strong sense of duty, religious and moral, that at fifteen his difficulties had been all nearly overcome; and except when occasional acts of thoughtlessness and hasty impulse lured him into error and its painful consequences, he was as happy and as good a lad as even his anxious mother could desire.

The elder of his two sisters resembled him in the bright dark flashing eye, the straight intellectual brow, the rich dark brown hair, and well-formed mouth; but the expression was so different at present, that it was often difficult to trace the likeness that actually existed. Haughtiness, and but too often ill-temper, threw a shade over a countenance, which when happy and animated was not only attractive then, but gave fair promise of great beauty in after years. The disposition of Caroline Hamilton was in fact naturally so similar to that of her aunt Mrs. Fortescue, that Mrs. Hamilton's task with her was not only more difficult and painful in the present, than with any of the others, but her dread of the future, at times so overpowering that it required all her husband's influence to calm her, by returning trust in Him, who had promised to answer all who called upon Him, and would bless that mother's toils which were based on, and looked up alone, to His influence on her child, and guidance for herself.

The blue-eyed, fair-haired, graceful, little Emmeline, not only the youngest of the family, but, from her slight figure, delicate small features, and childish manner, appearing even much younger than she was, was indeed a source of joy and love to all, seeming as if sorrow, except for others, could not approach her. She had indeed much that required a carefully guiding hand, in a yielding weakness of disposition, indolent habit in learning, an unrestrained fancy, and its general accompaniment, over-sensitiveness of feeling, but so easily guided by affection, and with a disposition so sweet and gentle, that a word from her mother was always

enough. Mrs. Hamilton had little fears for her, except indeed as for the vast capability of individual suffering which such a disposition engendered, in those trials which it was scarcely possible she might hope to pass through life without. There was only one safeguard, one unfailing comfort, for a character like hers, and that was a deep ever-present sense of religion, which untiringly, and yet more by example than by precept, her parents endeavoured to instil. Greatly, indeed, would both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton have been astonished, had they been told, that the little girl Ellen Fortescue, who to both was such an enigma, and who was seemingly in all things so utterly unlike their Emmeline, was in natural disposition *exactly the same*; and that the vast difference in present and future character, simply arose from the fact, that the early influences of the one were sorrow and neglect, and of the other, happiness and love.

"I wonder whether Mamma and Papa will really come home to night;" observed Caroline, after several minutes of unbroken silence, all seemingly so engrossed in their several occupations as to have no inclination to speak. "And if they do, I wish we could know the exact time, I do so hate expecting and being disappointed."

"Then neither wonder nor expect, my sage sister," replied Percy, without, however, raising his head or interrupting his writing; "and I will give you two capital reasons for my advice. Firstly, wonder is the offspring of ignorance, and has two opposite effects on my sex and on yours. With us it is closely connected with philosophy, for we are told in 'wonder all philo-

sophy begins, in wonder it ends, and adoration fills up the interspace ;' but with you, poor weak creatures, the only effect it produces is increased curiosity, of which you have naturally a more than adequate supply. Secondly, if you begin to wonder and expect, and speculate as to the ayes and noes of a contingency to-night, you will not cease talking till Mamma really does appear ; and then good-bye to my theme, for to write while your tongue is running is impossible. So pray take my advice, on consideration that you have had as good a sermon from me as my reverend brother Herbert can ever hope to give."

"I do not think Mamma and Papa will be quite satisfied if he do not give us a much better one, even the first time he attempts it ;" rejoined Emmeline, with a very arch look at her brother.

"What, you against me, Miss Emmy ! and beginning to talk too. You forget what an important personage I am, during Papa's absence especially ; and that as such, I am not to be insulted with impunity. So here goes—as a fresh exercise for your patience !" and he mingled all the fixed and unfixd parts of her map in most bewildering confusion, regardless of her laughing entreaty to let them alone.

"You have tried a very bad way to keep me quiet, Percy," continued Caroline ; "you must either explain why wonder may not equally have the same good effect on us as on you, or retract your words entirely. You know you would not have expressed such a contemptuous opinion, if Mamma had been present."

"My mother is such a very superior person, that when she is present her superiority extends over her whole

sex, Caroline ; even you are safe, because, as her child, it is to be hoped that one of these days you may be something like her : exactly I do not expect—two such women as my mother cannot exist.”

“As if your opinion were of such importance, Percy,” replied Caroline haughtily ; “it really is very little consequence to me whether you think me like Mamma or not.”

“It is to me, though,” rejoined Emmeline, earnestly ; “I would rather be like Mamma than like anybody else, and I should like Percy to think I was, because then he would love me still more.”

“Bravo, my little Em. ; spoken almost as well as I could myself ; and, as a reward, as soon as this most annoying piece of erudition is accomplished, I will help you with your map. Why, you silly little thing, you have put Kamschatka as the terra firma of South America ; no doubt that ice and snow would be very welcome there, but how the Americans would stare to see the fur-clad Kamschatkans such near neighbours. That’s it ; go on, puzzle away till I can help you. And you, Miss Caroline, retain your contempt of my opinion, and may you never repent it.”

“I thought you told me not to talk, Percy,” replied his sister ; “and I should like to know who is talking the most, you or I ? You will not finish what you are doing before the bell rings for prayers, if you go on in this way.”

“That proves how little you know the extent of my powers. I have only to make a clean copy of these learned reflections. Why, in the name of all the gods,

were there such provokingly clever people as Seneca, Cicero, Pliny, and a host of others! or, if they must be wise, why did they not burn all the written wisdom, instead of leaving it as means of torture in the hands of learned pedagogues, yclept schoolmasters, and as a curse on those poor unfortunates whose noddles are not wise enough to contain it."

"I should be very sorry if all the ancient authors were thus annihilated," observed Herbert, looking up from his book with a bright smile. "I should lose a great deal of enjoyment even now, and still more by and by, when I know more."

"Ay, but my dear fellow, your head is not quite so like a sieve as mine. Yours receives, contains, digests, and sends forth the matter improved by your own ideas; but as for mine, the matter undoubtedly enters, but runs out again, and only leaves behind that which is too large and gross to pass through. No, no, Bertie, your head and mine are not related even in the twentieth degree of consanguinity, however nearly connected their masters may be. Hush! not a word, I have only one line more; what a wise man that was to be sure who said, '*Otiosum esse quam nihil agere*'—better to be idle than doing nothing. Don't shake your head and laugh, Emmy. Vale! never did I say good-bye so willingly. Hurrah! Mamma and Papa may come home when they like now. Cast your eye over it, Herbert; just tell me if it look correct, and then vale books—vale pens—vale desk for to-night!" He placed his writing on his brother's open book, threw his dictionary and grammar high in air, and dexterously caught them

as they fell, piled up his books, closed his desk, and then, with a comical sigh of relief, flung himself full length on a sofa.

"Now that you have finished your task, Percy, perhaps you will have the kindness to inform us why at this time of the evening you have been writing Latin?" inquired Caroline.

"And open my wound afresh! However, it is quite right that Miss Harcourt should know that, if I am ill from over-study to-morrow, it is her doing."

"Mine!" answered Miss Harcourt, laughing; "pray explain yourself, young man, for I am so perfectly innocent as not even to understand you."

"Did you not this morning give me a message to Lady Helen Grahame?"

"I did, you passed her house on your way to Mr. Howard's."

"Well, then, if you had not given me the message, much as I felt disinclined to pore over musty books and foolscap paper, from the extreme loveliness of the morning, I should have nerved myself to go straight on to the Rectory. Lady Helen was not visible, so I tarried, believing your message of vital importance, and Annie came to me—by the by, what a little woman that child is; Emmeline, you are a baby to her. I wonder she condescends to associate with you."

"I do not think she is at all fond of me—Caroline is her friend," replied Emmeline; "but what can Annie have to do with your Latin?"

"A great deal—for she talked and we walked, and time walked too, and by the time I had seen Lady Helen, it was two hours later than I ought to have been

with Mr. Howard. On I went, feeling not particularly comfortable; but though it is clear logic that if Miss Harcourt had not sent me to Lady Helen's I should not have been led into temptation, I was magnanimous enough not to mention her, but to lay the whole blame of my non-appearance, on my own disinclination for any study but that of nature. Mr. Howard looked grave and sorrowful—I wish to heaven he was more like any other schoolmaster; that look and tone of his are worse than any rod!—and to redeem my lost time in the morning, I was desired to write a Latin theme on a letter of Pliny's this evening. And now that I have satisfied all your inquiries, please satisfy mine. Is there any chance of Mamma's coming home to night?"

"Every probability," replied Miss Harcourt. "It only depends on your cousin, who is so very delicate, that, if she were too fatigued, Mr. Hamilton would remain at Exeter to-night, and proceed here early to-morrow."

"Well, my little cousin, though I have not the pleasure of knowing you, I hope you will be so kind as to let Mamma come on to night, for we have been too long without her, and I long to resign to Papa his robes of office, for they sit mightily like borrowed plumes upon me. Mamma writes of Ellen and Edward—I wonder what they are like! Come, Tiny, paint them for me—your fertile fancy generally fills up the shadow of a name."

"I cannot, Percy, for I am afraid my pictures would not be agreeable."

"Not agreeable!" repeated Percy and Miss Harcourt together. "Why not?"

Emmeline hesitated, then answered ingenuously, "We are so very, very happy together, that I do not feel quite sure that I am glad my cousins are going to live with us."

"What! are you afraid I shall love Ellen more than you, Emmy?" exclaimed her brother, starting up and sitting on her chair; "do not be alarmed, Tiny; no cousin shall take your place."

"Indeed, I am not afraid of that, Percy, dear," she replied, looking so fondly in his face, that he gave her a hearty kiss. "I cannot tell why I should feel half sorry that they are coming, but I am quite sure I will do all I can to make them happy."

"You could not do otherwise if you were to try, Tiny. Come, Caroline, what say you? We have all been thinking about them, so we may as well give each other the benefit of our thoughts."

"Suppose I do not feel inclined to do so?"

"Why, we must all believe you are ashamed of them," replied Percy, quickly, "and if you are, I know who has made you so. I would lay any wager, the whole time you have been with Lady Helen Grahame, since Mamma has been away, she has been talking of nothing else—look, look she is blushing—I am right."

"And if she did," replied Caroline, very much provoked, "she said nothing that I am ashamed of repeating. She knew my aunt before she went to India, and I am sure if her children are like her, they will be no agreeable additions to our family."

"Bravo, Caroline! you really are an apt pupil; Lady Helen's words and manner completely! but you may have one comfort; children are not always like their

parents, and if they are as unlike Lady Helen's description of my poor aunt (which by the way she had no right to give, nor you to listen to) as you are at this moment unlike Mamma, we shall get on capitally, and need have no fears about them."

"Percy, you are intolerably disagreeable!"

"Because I speak the sad sober truth? Caroline, do pray, get rid of that dawning ill temper, before Mamma comes; it will not be a pleasant welcome home."

"I am not ill-tempered, Percy: I suppose I may have my own opinion of Ellen and Edward, as well as all of you," replied his sister, angrily.

"But do not let it be an unkind one, without knowing them, dear Caroline," interposed Herbert, gently; "it is so very difficult to get rid of a prejudice when once it has entered our minds, even when we know and feel that it is a wrong one. I am sure if we only thought how sad it is that they have neither father nor mother to love them, and are coming all amongst strangers—born in a strange land too—we should find quite enough to think kindly about, and leave all wonder as to what they will be like, till we know them. I dare say we shall often have to bear and forbear, but that we have to do with each other, and it will only be one brother and sister more."

"Brother and sister! I am sure I shall not think of them so, Herbert, however you may. My father might have been a nobleman, and who knows anything of theirs?"

"Caroline, how can you be so ridiculous!" exclaimed Percy, with a most provoking fit of laughter. "Their father served and died for his king—as our grandfather

did; and had he lived might have been offered a title too—and their mother—really I think you are very insulting to Mamma: her sister's children I should imagine quite as high in rank as ourselves!"

"And even if they were not—what would it signify?" rejoined Herbert. "Dear Caroline, pray do not talk or think so; it makes me feel so sorry, for I know how wrong it is—we might have been in their place."

"I really cannot fancy anything so utterly impossible," interrupted Caroline, "so you may spare the supposition, Herbert."

"It is no use, Bertie; you must bring the antipodes together, before you and Caroline will think alike," interposed Percy, perceiving with regret the expression of pain on his brother's face, and always ready to guard him either from physical or mental suffering, feeling instinctively that, from his extraordinary mind and vivid sense of duty, he was liable to the latter, from many causes which other natures would pass unnoticed.

Miss Harcourt did not join the conversation. It had always been Mrs. Hamilton's wish that in their intercourse with each other, her children should be as unrestrained as if they had been alone. Had Caroline's sentiments received encouragement, she would have interfered; but the raillery of Percy and the earnestness of Herbert, she knew were more likely to produce an effect than anything like a rebuke from herself, which would only have caused restraint before her in future. It was through this perfect unrestraint that Mrs. Hamilton had become so thoroughly acquainted with the several characters of her children. That Caroline's sentiments caused her often real pain was

true, but it was far better to know them, and endeavour to correct and remove them, by causing education to bear upon the faults they revealed, than to find them concealed from her by the constant fear of words of reproof.

To remove Herbert's unusual seriousness, Percy continued, laughingly—

"Miss Harcourt, what are your thoughts on this momentous subject? It is no use asking Herbert's, we all know them without his telling us; but you are almost the principally concerned of the present party, for Ellen will bring you the trouble of another pupil."

"I shall not regret it, Percy; but shall only rejoice if I can in any way lessen your mother's increased charge. As for what your cousins will be like, I candidly tell you, I have scarcely thought about it. I have no doubt we shall find them strange and shy at first; but we must do all we can to make them feel they are no strangers."

"And now, then, it only remains for the right honorable me to speak; and really Emmy and Herbert and you have told my story, and left me nothing. I do not know whether I am pleased or not, but I am very sorry for them; and it will be capital if this Master Edward turns out a lad of spirit and mischief, and not over-learned or too fond of study—one, in fact, that I can associate with, without feeling such a painful sensation of inferiority as I do when in company with my right reverend brother."

"Dear Percy, do not call me reverend," said Herbert, appealingly: "I feel it almost a mockery now, when I am so very far from being worthy to become a clergyman."

"You are a good fellow, Bertie; and I will not tease you, if I can help it—but really I do not mean it for

mockery ; you know, or ought to know, that you are better now than half the clergymen who have taken orders, and as much superior to me in goodness as in talent."

"Indeed I know no such thing, Percy ; I am not nearly so strong in health as you are, and am, therefore, naturally more fond of quiet pleasures : and as for talent, if you were as fond of application as of frolic, you would leave me far behind."

"Wrong, Bertie, quite wrong ! but think of yourself as you please, I know what everybody thinks of you. Hush ! is that the sound of a carriage, or only the wind making love to the old oaks ?"

"The wind making love, Percy !" repeated Emmeline, laughing ; "I neither hear that, nor the carriage-wheels kissing the ground."

"Well done, Tiny ! my poetry is beaten hollow ; but there—there—I am sure it is a carriage !" and Percy bounded from the table so impetuously as nearly to upset it, flung back the curtain, and looked eagerly from the window.

Herbert closed his book to listen ; Emmeline left her nearly-completed map, and joined Percy ; Caroline evidently tried to resume serenity, but, too proud to evince it, industriously pursued her work, breaking the thread almost every time that she drew out the needle.

"It is nothing, Percy ; how could you disappoint us so !" said Herbert, in a tone of regret.

"My good fellow, you must be deaf—listen ! nearer and louder—and, look there, Emmeline, through those trees, don't you see something glimmering ? that must be the lamp of the carriage."

"Nonsense, Percy, it is a glowworm."

"A glowworm! why, Em., the thought of seeing Mamma has blinded you. What glowworm ever came so steadily forward? No! there is no mistake now. Hurrah, it *is* the carriage: here Robert, Morris, Ellis, all of you, to the hall! to the hall! The carriage is coming down the avenue." And with noisy impatience, the young gentleman ran into the hall, assembled all the servants he had named, and others too, all eager to welcome the travellers; flung wide back the massive door, and he and Herbert both were on the steps several minutes before the carriage came in sight.

CHAPTER II.

THREE ENGLISH HOMES, AND THEIR INMATES.

IF more than the preceding conversation were needed to reveal the confidence and love with which Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were regarded by their children, the delight, the unrestrained expressions of affection, with which by every one of the young party they were received, would have evinced it still more clearly. Herbert was very speedily on his favorite seat, a low stool at his mother's feet. Emmeline, for that one half hour at least, assumed her still unresigned privilege, as the youngest and tiniest, to quietly slip in her lap; Percy was talking to his father, making Edward perfectly at home, saying many kind words to Ellen, and caressing his mother, all almost at the same moment. Caroline was close to her father, with her arm round his neck; and Miss Harcourt was kindly disrobing Ellen from her many wraps, and making her lie quietly on a sofa near her aunt; who, even in that moment of delighted reunion with her own, had yet time and thought, by a few judicious words, to remove the undefinable but painful sensation of loneliness which was creeping over the poor child as she gazed on her bright, happy-looking cousins; and thought if to her own mother Edward's beauty and happiness had made him so much more beloved than herself, what claim could she have

body and mind had been most sedulously cultivated, he had never been taught even the public ordinances of religion, much less its inward spirit. His mother had often and often felt a pang of reproach, at thus neglecting that which an inward voice would whisper was most essential; but she was wont to silence the pang by the determined idea, that she was neither worthy nor able to give him such solemn lessons, and that it would come by instinct to him in after years. There was time enough for him to think of such things. He had been now and then to church, but it was a mere form, regarded as a weary duty, from which he escaped whenever he could. The present scene then completely bewildered him. He had always fancied himself superior to any of the boys he had associated with; but as he looked at and listened to Herbert, who seemed at most only two years older than himself, he became sensible of a very strange and disagreeable, but a very decided feeling of inferiority: and then, too, it was so incomprehensible the servants all joining them, a class of people whom in India he had been taught so to consider his inferiors, that even to speak with them was a species of degradation; and he was destined to be still more surprised, for before they left the library, he heard his aunt and uncle address them all, and say a few kind words, and make inquiries after their families, to each.

To Ellen that evening service recalled some of Mr. Myrvin's instructions, and seemed to help her to realize those new thoughts and feelings, which she had learned, for the first time, in Wales. Her father had, indeed, the last year of his life tried to give her

some idea of religion ; but having only so very lately began to think seriously himself, he felt diffident and uncertain of his own powers, and so left an impression more of awe towards the subject than of love, which to a disposition such as Ellen's was unfortunate.

A very short time sufficed for Percy and Emmeline to introduce their cousins to all the delights and mysteries of their dear old home : and Oakwood Hall was really a place for imagination to revel in. It was a large castellated mansion, fraught with both the associations of the past, and the comforts of the present. The injuries which the original mansion had received during the civil war of Charles I, had, when the family returned at the Restoration, caused much of the old house to be pulled down, and replaced with larger rooms, and greater conveniences for a modern dwelling-house, retaining, however, quite sufficient of the past to throw interest around it.

The wings were still flanked with turrets, which were Percy and Emmeline's delight ; and the many staircases, leading into all sorts of nooks and corners, —and the small and most uncomfortable rooms, because some of them happened to be hung with tapestry, and had those small narrow windows sunk in deep recesses, —were pronounced by both far more enjoyable than the beautiful suite of rooms forming the centre of the mansion, and the dwelling of the family. These were only saved from being disagreeably modern—Percy would declare—by their beautiful richly-polished oaken panels, and by the recesses which the large windows still formed, making almost a room by themselves. The hall, too, with its superb sweep of staircase and

broad carved oaken balustrade, leading to a gallery above, which opened on the several sleeping apartments, and thus permitting the full height of the mansion, from base to roof, to be visible from the hall. The doors visible in the gallery opened mostly on dressing-rooms, or private sitting-rooms, which led to the large airy sleeping-rooms, to which the servants had access by back staircases leading from their hall; and so leaving the oaken staircase and gallery entirely to the use of the family, and of many a game of noisy play had that gallery been the scene. There had been a beautiful little chapel adjoining the mansion, but it was mercilessly burnt to the ground by the infatuated Puritans, and never restored; the venerable old church of the village henceforth serving the family of the hall.

Situated on the banks of the Dart, whose serpentine windings gave it the appearance of a succession of most lovely lakes, Nature had been so lavish of her beauties in the garden and park, especially in the magnificent growth of the superb oaks, from which the estate took its name, that it was not much wonder Mrs. Hamilton, always an intense lover of Nature, should have become so attached to her home as never to feel the least inclination to leave it. She did not wish her girls to visit London till a few months before Caroline was old enough to be introduced, to give them then finishing masters; and to that time she of course always looked, as demanding from her part of the year to be spent in town. The career of Eleanor, the recollections of the frivolity and error into which her own early youth had been thrown, had given her not only a

distaste but an actual dread of London for her girls, till such principles and associations had been instilled which would enable them to pass through the ordeal of successive seasons without any change of character or feeling. Her sons, since their tenth year, had more than once accompanied their father to the metropolis; but though these visits were always sources of enjoyment, especially to Percy, they never failed to return with unabated affection to their home, and to declare there was no place in England like it.

Mr. Hamilton, though in neither profession nor business, was far from being an idle man. His own estate was sufficiently large, and contained a sufficient number of dependants, for whose mortal and immortal welfare he was responsible, to give him much employment; and in addition to this, the home interests and various aspects of his country were so strongly entwined with his very being,—that, though always refusing to enter Parliament, he was the prompter and encourager of many a political movement, having for its object amelioration of the poor and improvement of the whole social system; closely connected with which, as he was, they gave him neither public fame nor private emolument. He acted in all things from the same single-hearted integrity and high honour which caused him to refuse the title proffered to his father. Her husband's connexion with many celebrated characters, and her own correspondence, and occasional visits from her friends to Oakwood, prevented Mrs. Hamilton's interest from too complete concentration in her home, as in her first retirement, many feared. She had, too, some friends near her, whose society gave her both pleasure and in-

terest ; and many acquaintances who would have visited more than she felt any inclination for, had she not had the happy power of quietly pursuing her own path, and yet conciliating all.

The Rev. William Howard had accepted Mr. Hamilton's eagerly-proffered invitation to become his rector, and undertake the education of his boys, from very peculiar circumstances. He had been minister of a favorite church in one of the southern towns, and master of an establishment for youths of high rank, in both which capacities he had given universal satisfaction. The reprehensible conduct of some of his pupils, carried on at first so secretly as to elude his knowledge, at length became so notorious as to demand examination. He had at first refused all credence, but when proved, by the confused replies of all, and half confession of some, he briefly and emphatically laid before them the enormity of their conduct, and declared, that as confidence was entirely broken between them, he would resign the honour of their education, refusing to admit them any longer as members of his establishment. In vain the young men implored him to spare them the disgrace of such expulsion ; he was inexorable.

This conduct, in itself so upright, was painted by the smarting offenders in such colours, that Mr. Howard gradually but surely found his school abandoned, and himself so misrepresented, that a spirit less self-possessed and secure in its own integrity must have sunk beneath it. But he had some true friends and none more active and earnest than Mr. Hamilton. A very brief residence at Oakwood Rectory removed even the recollection of the injustice he had experienced, and he

himself, as pastor and friend, proved a treasure to high and low. Ten other youths, sons of the neighbouring gentry, became his pupils, their fathers gladly following in Mr. Hamilton's lead.

About a mile and a half across the park was Moorlands, the residence of Lady Helen Grahame, whose name had been so often mentioned by the young Hamiltons. Her husband, Montrose Grahame, had been Arthur Hamilton's earliest friend, at home, at college, and in manhood. Lady Helen, the youngest daughter of a marquis, had been intimate with Emmeline and Eleanor Manvers from childhood, and had always admired and wished to resemble the former, but always failed, she believed from being constituted so differently; others might have thought from her utter want of energy and mental strength. The marriage at first appeared likely to be a happy one, but it was too soon proved the contrary. Grahame was a man of strict, perhaps severe principles; his wife, though she never did anything morally wrong, scarcely knew the meaning of the word. Provoked with himself for his want of discrimination, in imagining Lady Helen so different to the being she really was; more than once discovering that she did not speak the exact truth, or act with the steady uprightness he demanded, his manner became almost austere; and in consequence, becoming more and more afraid of him, Lady Helen sunk lower and lower in his esteem.

Two girls and a boy were the fruits of this union. Lady Helen had made a great many excellent resolutions with regard to their rearing and education, which she eagerly confided to Mrs. Hamilton, but when the time

of trial came, weakness and false indulgence so predominated, that Grahame, to counteract these evil influences, adopted a contrary extreme, and, by a system of constant reserve and severity, became an object of as much terror to his children as he was to his wife. But he did not pursue this conduct without pain, and never did he visit Oakwood without bitter regret that his home was not the same.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had often tried to alter the aspect of affairs at Moorlands,—the former, by entreating Grahame to be less severe; the latter, by urging Lady Helen to a firmer mode of conduct. But those friendly efforts were as yet entirely useless. Grahame became a member of Parliament, which took his family to London for five or six months in the year—a particularly agreeable change to Lady Helen, who then associated with her sisters, whose families were conducted much on the same fashion as her own, but unfortunately only increasing the discomfort of Moorlands when they returned to it. And this was the more to be regretted, from the fact that both Grahame and his wife were full of good intentions, and had the one been more yielding, and the other more firm, there might have been no small share of happiness for both.

But heavy as Lady Helen thought her trial in the want of her husband's confidence and love, and which she had greatly brought upon herself, it was light in comparison with that of Mrs. Greville, another near neighbour and valued friend of Mrs. Hamilton. She had loved and married a man whose winning manners and appearance, and an ever-varying flow of intelligent conversation, had completely concealed, till too late, his

real character. Left at a very early age his own master, with a capital estate and large fortune; educated at a very large public school, at which he learned literally nothing but vice, and how effectually to conceal it; courted and flattered wherever he went, he became vain, overbearing, and extravagant; with no pursuit but that of gambling in all its varieties, even hunting and shooting could not be thoroughly enjoyed without some large bets depending on the day's sport: his thoughts from boyhood were so completely centred in self, that he had affection for nothing else. He had indeed fancied he loved Jessie Summers, when he had so successfully wooed her, but the illusion was speedily dispelled, and repeatedly he cursed his folly for plaguing himself with a wife. His first child, too, was a girl, and that annoyed him still more; and when the next year a boy was granted, he certainly rejoiced, but it was such rejoicing as to fill his wife's heart with an agony of dread; for he swore he would make his boy as jovial a spirit as himself, and that her namby-pamby ideas should have nothing to do with him.

It was indeed a difficult and painful task Mrs. Greville had to perform. Though her husband would spend weeks and even months at a time away, the impressions she so earnestly and prayerfully sought to instil into her son's heart were, or appeared to be, completely destroyed by her husband's interference the whole time of his sojourn at his home. It was his pleasure to thwart her every plan, laugh at her fine notions, make a mockery of all that was good, and holy, and self-denying, and all in the presence of his children; succeeding in making Alfred frequently guilty of

disrespect and unkindness, but failing entirely with Mary, who, though of such a fragile frame and gentle spirit that her father's visits almost always caused her a fit of illness, so idolized her suffering but never murmuring mother, that she only redoubled her attention and respect whenever she saw her more tried than usual. This conduct, of course, only made her an object equally with her mother—of her father's sneers and taunts, but she bore it with the true spirit of a martyr. Suffering was doing for her what Herbert Hamilton was naturally—making her spiritual and thoughtful far beyond her years, and drawing her and Herbert together with such a bond of mutual reverence and sympathy, that to talk to him was her greatest consolation, and to endeavour to lessen her sorrows one of his dearest pleasures.

Alfred was not naturally an evil-disposed boy, and when his father was from home seldom failed either in respect or obedience. Mrs. Greville possessed the rather rare combination of extreme submissiveness with a natural dignity and firmness, which enabled her to retain the reverence and sympathy of her friends and her household, without once stooping to receive their pity. It was generally supposed by those who did not know her personally, that she was one of those too soft and self-denying characters who bring on themselves the evils they deplore; but this in Mrs. Greville's case was a very great mistake. It was impossible to associate even casually with her, without feeling intuitively that she suffered deeply, but the emotion such conviction called was respect alone.

As anxious and as earnest a parent as Mrs. Hamilton

herself, Mrs. Greville failed not to inculcate the good in both her children, and still more forcibly, when they became old enough to observe, by example than by precept. But with Alfred there must have been an utter hopelessness as to the fruit of her anxious labours, had she not possessed that clinging, single-hearted trust which taught her that no difficulty should deter from a simple duty, and that nothing was too hard for Him who—if He saw that she shrunk not from the charge and responsibility which, in permitting her to become a mother, He had given, and did all she could to counteract those evil influences, for the removal of which she had no power—would, in His own good time, reward, if not on earth,—with Him in Heaven; and so untiringly, as uncomplainingly, she struggled on.

CHAPTER III.

HOME SCENE.—VISITORS.—CHILDISH MEDITATIONS.

THE part of the day which to Emmeline Hamilton was the happiest of all, was that in which she and Caroline, and now, of course, Ellen, were with their mother alone. Not that she particularly liked the very quiet employment of plain work, which was then their usual occupation, but that she could talk without the least restraint either about her lessons, or her pleasures, or her thoughts, and the stories or histories she had been reading, and if she thought wrong no one ever corrected her so delightfully and impressively as "Mamma." The mornings, from three to four hours, according as their age and studies required, were always under the control of Miss Harcourt, with such visits from Mrs. Hamilton as gave an increased interest to exertion, and such interruption only as permitted their practice and lessons in music, which three times a week Mrs. Hamilton had as yet herself bestowed. The dressing-bell always rung at half-past three, and dinner was at four, to allow the lads' return from Mr. Howard's, whose daily lessons commenced at nine and concluded at three. From half-past one to half-past three in the very short days was devoted to recreation, walking, or driving, and in the longer, to Emmeline's favorite time—an hour at work with her mother, and

the remainder to the preparation of lessons and exercises for the next day, which in the winter occupied from five to six. From six to seven in the same generally gloomy season they read aloud some entertaining book with their mother and Miss Harcourt, and seven was the delightful hour of a general reunion at tea, and signal for such recreation till nine as they felt inclined for; their brothers having been employed for Mr. Howard part of the time between dinner and tea, with sufficient earnestness to enjoy the rest and recreation afterwards, quite as buoyantly and gladly as their sisters, and many a merry dance enlivened their winter evenings.

In the summer, of course, this daily routine was frequently varied by most delightful excursions in the country. Mrs. Hamilton earnestly longing to implant a love of Nature and all its fresh pure associations in the minds of her children while yet young, knowing that once obtained, the pleasures of the world would be far less likely to obtain too powerful dominion. That which the world often terms romance, she felt to be a high pure sense of poetry in the Universe and in Man, which she was quite as anxious to instil as many mothers to root out. She did not believe that to cultivate the spiritual needed the banishment of the matter of fact; but she believed, that to infuse the latter with the former would be their best and surest preventive against all that was low and mean; their best help in the realization of a constant unfailing piety. For the same reason she cultivated a taste for the beautiful, not only in her girls, but in her boys—and beauty, not in arts and Nature alone, but in character. She did not allude to

beauty of merely the high and striking kind, but to the lowly virtues, struggles, faith, and heroism in the poor—their forbearance and kindness to one another—marking something to admire, even in the most rugged and surly, that at first sight would seem so little worthy of notice. It was gradually and almost unconsciously, to accustom her daughters to such a train of thought and sentiment, that she so particularly laid aside one part of the day to have them with her alone ; ostensibly, it was to give part of their day to working for the many poor, to whom gifts of ready-made clothing are sometimes much more valuable than money ; but the *education* of that one hour she knew might, for the right cultivation of the heart, do more than the mere *teaching* of five or six, and that education, much as she loved and valued Miss Harcourt, she had from the first resolved should come from her alone.

To Emmeline this mode of life was so happy, she could not imagine anything happier. But Caroline often and often envied her great friend Annie Grahame, and believed that occasional visits to London would make her much happier, than remaining all the year round at Oakwood and only with her own family. She knew the expression of such sentiments would meet no sympathy at home, and certainly not obtain their gratification, so she tried to check them, except when in company with Annie and Lady Helen ; but her mother knew them, and from the discontent and unhappiness they so often engendered in her child, caused her both pain and uneasiness. But she did not waver in her plans, because only in Emmeline they seemed to succeed : nor did she, as perhaps some over-scrupulous mothers would have

done, check Caroline's association with Miss Grahame. She knew that those principles must be indeed of little worth, which could only actuate in retirement, and when free from temptation. That to prevent intimacy with all, except with those of whom she exactly approved, would be impossible, if she ever meant her daughters to enter the world; and therefore she endeavoured so to obtain their unrestrained confidence and affection, as to be regarded both now, and when they were young women as their first, best, and truest friend, and that end obtained, intimacies with their young companions, however varied their character, she felt would do no permanent harm.

"Dear, dear Mamma!" exclaimed Emmeline, one morning about a week after her parents' return, and dropping her work to speak more eagerly, "you cannot think how delightful it does seem to have you at home again; I missed this hour of the day so very much; I did not know how much I loved it when I always had it, but when you were away, every time the hour came I missed you, and longed for you so much that—I am afraid you will think me very silly—I could not help crying."

"Why, how Percy must have laughed at you, Emmy!"

"Indeed, he did not, Mamma; I think he felt half inclined to cry too, the first day or two that he came home from Mr. Howard's, and could not rush up into your dressing-room, as he always does. He said it was a very different thing for you to go from home, than for him to go to London, and he did not like it at all; nor Herbert, nor Caroline, neither; though they did not say so much about it."

"I did not miss Mamma after the first, quite so much as you did, Emmeline," replied her sister, ingenuously ; "because when Lady Helen returned from London, she made me go there so often, and as I know you never refuse me that indulgence, Mamma, and Miss Harcourt did not object, I was glad to do so."

"I have only one objection, my dear Caroline, and I think you know what that is."

"That whenever I am with Annie I think and wish more about going to London, Mamma, I am afraid I do ; but indeed I try to think that you must know what is better for me, and try not to be discontented, though sometimes I know I do not succeed," and her eyes filled with tears.

"I am satisfied that you endeavour to trust my experience, my love ; I am quite aware of all the difficulties you have to encounter in doing so, and therefore your most trifling conquest of self is a great source of comfort to me. I myself should feel that the pain of increased discontent, and so of course increased difficulty in conquering its constant accompaniment, ill temper, would more than balance the pleasure of Annie's society, and so not indulge in the one so often at the expense of the other ; but of that you are yourself the best judge, and you know in such a case I always permit you to be a free agent. But what has become of Mary, Emmeline ? I begged Mrs. Greville to let you be as much together as possible during my absence ; did not her society afford you some pleasure ?"

"Oh, yes, Mamma, a great deal ; but unfortunately Mr. Greville was at home almost all the time you were away, and poor Mary could not often leave her mother,

and I don't feel as if it were quite right for me to go so often there, when he is at home. I am sure Mrs. Greville and Mary must both feel still more uncomfortable when any one is there to see how unkind he is, and hear the cruel things he says. Oh, how I do wish I could make poor Mary more happy!"

"She would tell you that affection is a great comfort to her, Emmy."

"Yours and Herbert's may be, Mamma, because you are both so much better and wiser than I am; but I can do so little, so very little."

"You can be and are a great source of interest to her, my dear; and when we wish very much to make another person happy, you may be quite sure that the most trifling act gives pleasure; but Ellen looks very much as if she would like to know who this Mary is, that is so tried—suppose you tell her."

Emmeline eagerly obeyed, painting her friend in such glowing colours, that Ellen felt, however tried she might be, a person so good and holy must be happy notwithstanding; besides, to be loved so by Mrs. Hamilton and Herbert, discovered to her mind such superior qualities, that she almost wondered how Emmeline could speak of her so familiarly, and think of her as her own particular friend. But the conversation on her and then on other topics so interested her, that she was almost as sorry as her cousin, when it was interrupted by a visit from Lady Helen Grahame and her daughter.

"Returned at length, dearest Emmeline!" was the former's lively greeting, and evincing far more warmth of manner than was usual to her. "Do you know, the banks of the Dart have seemed so desolate without

their guardian spirit, that the very flowers have hung their heads and the trees are withered."

"I rather think the change of season, and not my absence, has been the cause of these melancholy facts," replied Mrs. Hamilton, in the same tone; "but even London will not change your kind thought for me, Helen."

"Nay, I must follow the example of my neighbours, rich and poor, whom you may appeal to as to the fact of your absence causing terrible lamentation; ask this naughty little girl too, who scarcely ever came to see me, because she had so many things to do to please Mamma; but forgive me," she added, more seriously, as she glanced on the deep mourning of her friend, and indeed of all the group; "what a cold, heartless being you must believe me to run on in this way, when there has been so sad a cause for your absence—poor Eleanor!"

"I trust we may say happy Eleanor, my dear Helen; mercy has indeed been shown to her and to me—but we will talk of this another time. Annie," she continued, addressing Miss Grahame, who was already deep in conversation with Caroline, "I have another little girl to introduce to you, whom I hope you will be as friendly with as with Caroline and Emmeline."

The young lady turned round at the words, but her sole notice of Ellen, who had come timidly forward, was a haughty stare, a fashionable curtsy, and a few unintelligible words, which caused Emmeline to feel so indignant, that it was with difficulty she kept silence, and made Ellen so uncomfortable, that it was with even more than her usual shyness, she received Lady Helen's proffered hand.

"And why not introduce her to me too, Emmeline? I knew your mother when she was little older than you are, my dear; so I hope you will learn to know and to like me as fast as you can."

Ellen might have found courage to reply, for there was an interest attached to all who had known her mother; but as she raised her eyes to speak, she again encountered Annie's rude and disagreeable stare, and the words died on her lips. The young party were, however, soon all in the garden, for Mrs. Hamilton never made any scruple in dismissing her children, when she wished to speak on subjects she did not choose them to hear; and she was anxious so to relate Eleanor's illness and change of sentiment, as to remove the impressions which her early career had left on Lady Helen's memory.

"It must be nearly time for my brothers to be returning; shall we go and look for them, Ellen? I dare say Edward will have a great deal to tell you," was Emmeline's affectionate address, as Annie and Caroline turned in a different direction; and generally judging others by herself, she thought that being Edward's first day of regular attendance on Mr. Howard, Ellen would like to know all about it as soon as possible, and they proceeded accordingly.

"Well, how do you like your new cousins, what are they like?" inquired Miss Grahame, the moment she had Caroline entirely to herself.

"Edward I think I may like very much; he is so affectionate and so good-natured, and as merry and full of fun as Percy. And he is so handsome, Annie, I think even you would admire him."

"Then altogether he must be very unlike his sister. I never saw a girl so plain, and I am sure she looks as if no fun could exist near her."

"Mamma says we must remember how short a time has elapsed since poor aunt's death, and also that Ellen is not strong enough to be very lively."

"That does not at all account for her looking cross. I am sure she has nothing to be ill-tempered about; there are few girls in her situation who would have made one of your family, as she will be. Mamma said it would be a very anxious thing for Mrs. Hamilton."

"Mamma did seem to think so," replied Caroline, thoughtfully; "but I fancy you are wrong, Annie. Ellen has not yet given any proof of ill-temper."

"She has had no time, my dear, but no one can be deceived by such a face. My cousin, Lady Adelaide Maldon, told me she could always judge people by their faces. But do you like her as well as her brother, Caroline?"

"Ask me that question this day month, my dear Annie; I cannot answer you now, for I really do not know. I certainly do not see anything particularly striking in her yet—I do not understand her; she is so dreadfully shy or timid, and so very inanimate, one cannot tell whether she is pleased or sorry. To tell you the real truth, I am afraid I shall not like her."

"Why afraid?"

"Because Mamma would be so sorry were she to know it. I know she wishes us to love one another."

"Nonsense, Caroline. Mrs. Hamilton cannot be so unreasonable as to expect you to love everybody alike."

"Mamma is never unreasonable," replied Caroline,

with spirit; "and I do wish, Annie, you would treat Ellen exactly as you do us."

"Indeed, I shall not. What is Colonel Fortescue's daughter to me? Now don't be angry, Caroline, you and I are too old friends to quarrel for nothing; I shall certainly hate Ellen altogether, if she is to be a subject of dispute. Come, look kind again;" and the caress with which she concluded restored Caroline's serenity, and other subjects were discussed between them.

Annie Grahame was a few months younger than Caroline Hamilton (who was nearly thirteen), but from having been emancipated from the nursery and school-room at a very early age, and made her mother's companion and confidant in all her home vexations—very pretty and engaging,—she was very much noticed, and her visits to her titled relations in London, by causing her to imitate their fashionable manners, terms of speech, thoughts on dress, and rank, &c., made her a woman many years before her time; and though to Lady Helen's family and to Lady Helen herself this made her still more agreeable, from becoming so very companionable, to Mrs. Hamilton, and to all, in fact, who loved childhood for childhood's sake it was a source of real regret, as banishing all the freshness and artlessness and warmth which ought to have been the characteristics of her age. Her father was the only one of her own family who did not admire—and so tried to check—this assumption of fine ladyism, but it was not likely he could succeed, and he only estranged from him the affections of his child.

Annie Grahame had a great many fashionable acquaintances in London, but she still regarded Caroline

Hamilton as her favorite friend. Why, she could not exactly tell, except that it was so very delightful to have some one in the country to whom she could dilate on all the pleasures of London, display her new dresses, new music, drawings, work, &c. (not however considering it at all necessary to mention that her work and drawings were only *half* her own, and Caroline was much too truthful herself to imagine it, and her mother too anxious to retain that guileless simplicity to enlighten her, as she was well capable of doing). Annie's quick eye discovered that at such times Caroline certainly envied her, and she imagined she must be a person of infinite consequence to excite such a feeling, and this was such a pleasant sensation, that she sought Caroline as much as possible during their stay at Moorlands. Of Mrs. Hamilton, indeed, she stood in such uncomfortable awe, though that lady never addressed her except in kindness, that as she grew older, it actually became dislike; but this only increased her intimacy with Caroline, whom she had determined should be as unlike her mother as possible, and as this friendship was the only one of his daughter's sentiments which gave Mr. Grahame unmixed satisfaction, he encouraged it by bringing them together as often as he could.

Emmeline and Ellen meanwhile had pursued their walk in silence, both engrossed with their own thoughts (for that children of eleven years, indeed, of any age, do not think, because when asked what they are thinking about, their answer is invariably "Nothing," is one of those mistaken notions which modern education is, we hope, exploding). Emmeline was so indignant with

Annie that she felt more sure than ever that she did not and could never like her. "She is always talking of things Mamma says are of such little consequence, and is so proud and contemptuous, and I am afraid she does not always tell the exact truth. I wonder if it is wrong to feel so towards her; one day when I am quite alone with Mamma, I will ask her," was the tenor of her meditations.

But Ellen, though Annie's greeting had caused her to shrink still more into herself, and so produced pain, was not thinking only of her. The whole of that hour's intimate association with Mrs. Hamilton had puzzled her; she had doated on her father—she was sure she loved her aunt almost as dearly, but could she ever have given words to that affection as Emmeline had done, and as Edward always did? and so, perhaps, after all, she did not feel as they did, though the wish was so strong to caress her aunt, and sit as close and lovingly by her as Herbert and Emmeline and even Edward did; that its very indulgence seemed to give her pain. Then Caroline's confession too—could she ever have had courage to confess the indulgence of a feeling which she knew to be wrong—and all her aunt had said both to Caroline and Emmeline so fastened on her mind as to make her head ache, and she quite started when a loud shout sounded near them.

"It is only Percy," said Emmeline, laughing; "I dare say he and Edward are running a race, or having some sort of fun." And so they were; laughing, shouting, panting, they came full speed, darting in and out the trees, in every variety of mathematical figures their ingenuity could frame; but as soon as Percy's restless

eye discovered Emmeline, he directed his course towards her, exclaiming, "Holla, Edward, stop running for to-day; come here, and let us be sober. Why, Tiny, what brings you and Ellen out now? It is not your usual time."

"Ellen, Ellen, I have had such a happy day; I like Mr. Howard more than ever (he had only seen him twice before). I am sure I shall get on with him, and he will teach me astronomy and navigation too, so I shall not be ashamed to go to sea next year; I shall learn so much first."

"Let me walk home with you, dear Edward, and do tell me everything you have done and are going to do," asked Ellen, clinging to his arm, and looking in his face with such an expression, that there was little trace of ill-temper. Emmeline meanwhile had made her brother a party in her indignation against Annie's pride, which he termed insolence, vowing he would make her feel it. And as they came in sight of her and Caroline, he called out to Ellen, who, all her timidity returning, tried to draw Edward into another walk.

"Not there, not there, Miss Lelly, you are not going to cut me in that fashion. You have talked quite enough to Edward, and must now come to me. Edward, there's Mamma; off with you to tell your tale of delight to her." And Edward did not wait a second bidding, leaving Ellen to Percy, who threw his arm affectionately round her, and began talking to her so amusingly, that she could not help laughing, and so devoted did he appear to her, that he had only time to greet Miss Grahame, with a very marked and polite bow, and passed

on. He wished to provoke, and he succeeded, for Annie was always particularly pleased when the handsome, spirited Percy Hamilton paid her any attention, and that he should be so devoted to his little pale disagreeable-looking cousin, as not even to give her a word, annoyed her quite as much as he desired.

Edward's hasty progress to his aunt was slightly checked at seeing a stranger with her, but when he was introduced, he made his bow with so much of his mother's grace, that, combined with the extraordinary likeness, and her feelings already interested in Mrs. Hamilton's account of her sister's sufferings and death, Lady Helen could not for the moment speak, except to exclaim, "Oh, how that look recalls the past! I could almost fancy poor Eleanor herself stood before me."

"Did you—did you know my mother, madam?" said Edward, with so much eagerness that his cheeks crimsoned and his voice trembled.—"Were you one of—of—Mamma's"—but he could not finish the sentence, and leaning his head against his aunt, he burst into tears.

"Poor child!" said Lady Helen pityingly, as Mrs. Hamilton pressed him closer to her, and stooped down to kiss his forehead without speaking, and that sudden and unexpected display of feeling contrasted with Ellen's painful shyness, stamped at once and indelibly Lady Helen's opinion of the two orphans.

CHAPTER IV.

VARIETIES.

A FEW days more brought Mrs. Greville and Mary to welcome their friends, and Ellen had again the pain of being introduced to strangers ; but this time it was only the pain of her own shyness, for could she have overcome that feeling, she might have felt even pleasure. As it was, the gentle voice and manner with which Mrs. Greville addressed her, and the timid yet expressive glance of Mary, told of such sympathy and kindness, that she felt attracted towards both, and could quite enter into Emmeline's enthusiastic admiration of her friend ; not, however, believing it possible that she herself could ever be worthy to win Mary's regard. Taught from such a very early age to believe herself so far inferior to Edward, such characters as Herbert and Mary appeared to her so exalted, that it was quite impossible they could ever think of her ; the constant little acts of unobtrusive kindness that her cousin showed her, she attributed to his extreme goodness, not from the most trifling merit in herself. She did indeed love him very dearly, the best next to her aunt ; but so much of reverence mingled with it, that she was almost more reserved with him than with the others. But Herbert was naturally reserved himself in words, and so he did not think anything about it, except to

wish and endeavour to make his little cousin happier than she seemed.

When contrasting Mary Greville with Annie Grahame, as she was rather fond of doing, Emmeline became so afraid she was disliking the latter more than she ought to do, that she never rested till she made an opportunity to confess all her feelings to her mother, and beg her to tell her if they were very wrong, and if she ought to like her.

"I am not so unconscionable as to expect you to like every one with whom you associate, my dear little girl," replied her mother, fondly, for there was something in Emmeline's guileless confidence irresistibly claiming love. "All we have to do when we find nothing that exactly sympathizes with our own feelings, or our own ideas of right and wrong, is to try and find out some reason for their being so different; some circumstance that may have exposed them to greater temptations and trials, for you know I have often told you pleasure and amusements, if too much indulged in, are a much greater trial to some than sorrow and pain. Now Annie has had a great many more temptations of this kind than you or Mary, and we cannot expect one so very young entirely to resist them."

"Do you mean, Mamma, her going out so much in London?"

"Yes, love; she is very much noticed, and so perhaps thinks a little too much of appearance and dress and pleasure than is quite necessary."

"But Lady Helen need not take her out so much if she did not like. Do you think she is quite right to do so?" asked Emmeline, very thoughtfully.

"We must not pronounce judgment on other people's actions, my little girl. I think it better not to interrupt your present quiet and I hope happy life, and therefore I do not take you or Caroline to London; but Mr. Grahame is obliged to be there for several months, and Lady Helen very naturally would not like to be separated either from him or her children. And then she has such a large family and Annie so many young relations, that you see Lady Helen could not keep her children quite as free from temptation as I do mine, and we should be more sorry for Annie than blame her individually, however we may not like her faults. Do you understand me, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, Mamma, and I am so glad I took courage to tell you all I felt. I am afraid I have encouraged many unkind thoughts about her, and I am quite sorry now, for I see she cannot help them as much as I thought she could. I do not think I could ever make her my friend, but I will try very much not to dislike and avoid her."

"And that is all that is required of you, my love. When I tell you that our Father in Heaven commands us to love one another, and to avoid all unkindness in thought and deed, I do not mean that He desires us to love all alike, because He knew it would be neither for our happiness nor good that it should be so, but only to prevent the too great influence of prejudice and dislike. We might think such feelings can do no harm, because only confined to our own minds, but they would be sure gradually to lead us to taking pleasure in listening to their dispraise, and joining in it, and to seeing and talking only of their faults, forgetting

that if we had been circumstanced exactly as they are, we might have been just the same; and this is the feeling David condemns in one of the Psalms we read this morning. Are you tired of listening to me, dearest, or shall we read it over again together?"


Emmeline's only answer was to run eagerly for her little Bible, and with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes listen to her mother, as she turned to the fifteenth Psalm, and reading it through, particularly pointed out the third verse, and so explained it, as easily and happily to satisfy her child as to the Divine authority for all that she had said, and to stamp them still more forcibly on her memory.

"And now I do not mean to talk to you any more, my darling," she said, kissing the little earnest face upturned to hers. "You have heard quite enough to think about, and I am sure you will not forget it, so go and play; Ellen must be wondering what has become of you." And again full of glee, the happy child bounded away, exclaiming, as she did so, "Poor Annie, I am glad I am not exposed to such temptations, for I am sure I should not be able to resist them either."

But though any one who had seen her the next half hour might have fancied that a serious thought or sober task could not approach her, neither the conversation nor the Psalm was forgotten; with Herbert's explanatory assistance, she not only found the Psalm, but committed it to memory; and the second Sunday, after her conversation with her mother, repeated it so correctly and prettily to her father, as to give her the delight of his caressing approbation. Learning correctly by rote was always her greatest trial, for her

vivid fancy and very versatile powers occasioned her actual lessons to be considered such drudgery, as to require a great effort on her part to retain them. The sense, indeed, if she understood it, she learned quickly enough; but she preferred her own language to any one's else, and Mrs. Hamilton had some difficulty in making her understand that in time of study she required *correctness*, and not fancy; and that the attention which was necessary to conquer the words as well as sense of her lesson was much more important and valuable, however disagreeable it might seem, than the facility of changing the language to something prettier than the original.

When, therefore, as in the present case, she voluntarily undertook, and conquered, really a difficult task for a little lively girl, her parents had no scruple in giving the only reward she cared for—their approbation. It was in the bestowal of praise Mrs. Hamilton was compelled to be almost painfully guarded. She found that the least expression of unusual approbation caused Caroline to relax in her efforts, thinking she had done quite enough, and perniciously increasing her already too exalted ideas of herself. While to Emmeline it was the most powerful incentive to a continuance in improvement, and determined conquest of her faults. There was constantly a dread on the mother's heart, that Caroline would one day accuse her of partiality, from the different measure of her approbation which she was compelled to bestow; and yet pain as it was to persevere under such an impression, the future welfare of both was too precious to be risked for the gratification of the present.



She was watching with delight Emmeline's unrestrained enjoyment of her father's caresses and lively conversation, in which Percy as usual joined—for Tiny, as he chose to call her, was his especial pet and plaything—when she was startled by a low and evidently suppressed sob near her; Ellen was bending over a book of Bible-stories which Herbert had lent her, and her long ringlets completely concealed her face; Miss Harcourt and Caroline both looked up surprised, but a rapid sign from Mrs. Hamilton prevented their making any remark. Herbert fixed his eyes pityingly on his little cousin, as if wishing but not liking to address her. Edward was the only one of the party who moved. He was busily engaged in examining a large Noah's ark, and speculating as to its resemblance to a ship and its powers of floating, but after a few minutes' apparent thought he left it, and sitting down on Ellen's chair, put his arm round her, and begged her to find a picture of Noah's ark, and see if it were at all like the toy. Cheered by his affection, she conquered with a strong effort the choking in her throat, and turned to the page, and tried to sympathise in his wonder if it really were like the vessel in which Noah was saved, and where he could have put all the animals. Mrs. Hamilton joined them, and without taking more notice of Ellen's very pale cheeks and heavy eyes, than gently to put back the thick tresses that seemed to annoy her with their weight, gave them so much interesting information on the subject, and so delighted Edward with allowing him to drag down several books from the library, to find out all they said about it, that two hours slipped away quite unconsciously; and Ellen's very painful feeling had been so soothed, that she

could smile, and join Emmeline in making all the animals walk in grand procession to their temporary dwelling.

But Mrs. Hamilton did not forget the child's involuntary evidence of suffering, and vainly tried to imagine what at that moment could have caused it. Herbert seemed to think about it too, for the next day she heard him ask Edward—

"If he knew why his sister always looked so sad? if he thought it was because she was not yet reconciled to Oakwood?"

"It is not that," was Edward's reply: "she has always looked and seemed sad, as long as I can remember her. One reason may be, she was always ill in India, and Papa was often telling me how very much she suffered, and how patiently she bore it; and then, too, she knew I was poor Mamma's favorite (his voice trembled), and used to make her very unhappy; but I do not know why she is so very sad now, unless she is ill again, and that no one can tell, for she never will complain."

"Was your sister such a constant sufferer then?" inquired his aunt. "Come here, and tell me all you can about her, Edward. I wish I could know more of both your lives in India."

Edward with eager willingness communicated all he knew, though, from his being so constantly with his mother, and Ellen so much left to her father and herself, that all was little enough; adding, however, that after her very dangerous illness, when she was eight years old, he perfectly well remembered hearing some celebrated physician say to his father she would probably feel the effects of it all her life.

"It was a very long time before Mamma permitted me to see her," added Edward, "and when I did, I remember being almost frightened, she was so altered, so pale, and thin and weak; and then she was very ill after poor Papa's death; but since then she has never complained, and never kept her bed; but I know she is often in pain, for when I have touched her forehead sometimes, it has burnt my hand like fire."

This childish explanation certainly told Mrs. Hamilton more than she had known before; but that Ellen had witnessed the fearful scene of her father's death was still concealed. Edward, as he grew older, though he did not know why, seemed to shrink from the subject, particularly that he had been at a ball the same awful night.

A few days afterwards, as Mrs. Hamilton was crossing the large hall on her way to the school-room—for so, spite of Percy's determination that it should receive the more learned and refined appellation of studio, it was still called—she overheard Caroline's voice, exclaiming, in angry impatience—

"Indeed, I shall not, I have enough to do with my own lessons, without attending to other people's. It is your idleness, Ellen, not the difficulty of your lesson; for I am sure it is easy enough."

"For shame, Caroline!" was Emmeline's indignant reply. "She is not idle, and I am sure her lesson is not so easy; I wish I could explain it properly."

"You know Miss Harcourt herself said she was careless or idle to-day, and she must know. I am not going to lose my hour of recreation to help those who won't help themselves."

"How can you be so ill-natured, so unkind!" began Emmeline; but Ellen's beseeching voice interrupted her—

"Do not quarrel with your sister on my account, dearest Emmeline; I dare say I am very stupid, but my head does feel confused to-day; pray do not mind me, dear Emmy; go with Caroline, Aunt Emmeline will not like your remaining in."

Caroline had already quitted the room, and in her haste run against her mother, who she instantly perceived had heard all she said. With a deep blush, she turned as to re-enter the school-room, but Mrs. Hamilton stopped her—

"No," she said, gravely, "if you are only to act kindly for fear of my reproof, it will do no good either to yourself or Ellen. I could scarcely have believed it possible you should so have spoken, had I not heard it. Go and amuse yourself, as you intended; I rather think had you given up a little of your time to help your cousin, you would have experienced more real pleasure than you will now feel all day."

"Dear Mamma, will *you* help Ellen?" asked Emmeline, very timidly, for though at Ellen's reiterated entreaty she had left her, she felt it almost disrespect to run across the hall while her mother was speaking; and the thought suddenly crossed her that, as she was quite sure Ellen was not idle though Miss Harcourt thought she was, her mother by assisting her might save her from increased displeasure.

"Yes, dearest, if necessary; I have heard enough to satisfy me that you would if you could; and so I will, for your sake." And Emmeline ran away quite happy, to try all she could to soothe Caroline, whose self-

reproach had as usual terminated in a fit of ill-temper and anger against Ellen, instead of against herself.

Mrs. Hamilton entered the school-room, and stood by Ellen so quietly, that the child did not perceive her. Her attention was completely absorbed in her book; but after a few minutes she suddenly pushed it from her, and exclaiming almost passionately:

"I *cannot* learn it, try all I can! and Miss Harcourt will be so very, very angry,"—she gave way, for the first time since her arrival at Oakwood, to a violent burst of tears.

"What is this very, *very* difficult lesson, my little Ellen?" inquired her aunt, kindly taking one hand from her face. "Tell me, and we shall be able to learn it together, perhaps."

"Oh, no, no! it is because I am so very stupid; Miss Harcourt has explained it to me twice, and I know, I know I ought to understand it—but—"

"Well, then, never mind it to-day. We can all learn much better some days than others, you know; and I dare say to-morrow you will be able to conquer it."

"But Miss Harcourt is already displeased, and she will be still more so, if I leave it without her permission," replied the sobbing child, longing but not daring to throw her arms round her aunt's neck, and lean her aching head against her bosom.

"Not if I beg a reprieve," replied her aunt, smiling; "but you must not let it make you so very unhappy, Ellen. I am afraid it is not only your lesson, but that you are ill, or unhappy about something else. Tell me, dearest, what can I do to make you more happy, more at home?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" replied Ellen, struggling

with her tears. "Indeed I am happier than I ever thought I could be; I must be very ungrateful to make you think I am unhappy, when you are so good and so kind. My head ached to-day, and that always makes me feel a wish to cry; but indeed I am not unhappy, and never when you kiss me and call me your Ellen, whatever I may feel when you are not by;" and, as if frightened at her own confession, she hid her face in her aunt's dress.

Mrs. Hamilton lifted her into her lap, and kissed her without speaking.

"You must learn to love me more and more then, my Ellen," she said, after a pause, "and when you are feeling ill or in pain, you must not be afraid to tell me, or I shall think that you only fancy you love me."

"Oh, no, it is not fancy; I never loved any one as I do you—except Papa—my own darling good Papa!" the word was almost choked with sobs. "He used to fondle me and praise me, and call me his darling Ellen, as Uncle Hamilton did Emmeline last Sunday; and when I was ill, so ill, they said I should die, he never left me, except when his military duties called him away; and he used to nurse me, and try to amuse me, that I might forget pain and weakness. Oh, I shall never, never forget that dreadful night!" and she closed her eyes and shuddered, as the horrid scene of blood and death flashed before her.

"What dreadful night, my poor child?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, soothingly, after doubting whether or not it would be better for Ellen to pursue such an evidently painful theme, and no longer requiring an explanation of her emotion the previous Sabbath.

"The night poor Papa was killed;—oh, there were so

many horrid forms on the grass, the Natives and poor Papa's own men, and they looked so ghastly in the moonlight, and the grass was covered with blood and limbs and heads, that had been shot off; and there were such cries and groans of pain—I see it, I hear it all again so often before I go to sleep, and when my head feels as it does to day, and fancy I hear poor Papa's last words, and feel his kiss as he lay bleeding, bleeding slowly to death; and his voice was so strange and his lips so cold!"

"But how came you in such a dreadful scene, my poor Ellen? who could have permitted such a little child to be there?"

"Because I wished it so very much; I knew he would die before they could bring him to me, and I did so want to feel his kiss and hear his voice once more. Oh, Aunt Emmeline! shall I never see him again? I know he cannot come to me, but shall I, oh, shall I ever be good enough to go to him?" And she looked up in her aunt's face with such a countenance of beseeching entreaty, that Mrs. Hamilton's eyes filled with tears, and it was a full minute before she could speak; but when she did, Ellen felt more relieved and comforted, than on the subject of her father's death she had ever felt before. From her mother not being able to bear the subject even partially alluded to, and from having no one to whom she could speak of it, it had taken a still stronger hold of her imagination, and whenever she was unusually weak, and her head aching and confused, it became still more vivid. The very visible sympathy and interest of her aunt, and the gentle words in which she tried to turn the child's thoughts from that scene of

horror to the happiness of her father in Heaven, and an assurance that, if she tried to do her duty, and to love and serve God, and trust in His mercy, to render her efforts acceptable, she would rejoin him, seemed to remove the mass of tangled thought within her young mind. Her head indeed still ached very painfully, and her eyes seemed as if they would close, notwithstanding all her efforts to keep them open; but when she awoke from a long quiet sleep, on the sofa in Mrs. Hamilton's dressing-room, where her aunt had laid her, and found that kind friend still watching over her, the little heart and temples had ceased to throb so quickly, and she felt better and happier.

Mr. Maitland, the medical friend of the family, confirmed the opinion which Edward had said their physician in India had given of his sister's state of health. He did not, he said, consider her liable to serious illness, or of a constitution that would not endure; but that he feared it would be some years before she knew the blessing of really good health, and be constantly subject to that lassitude, severe headache, and the depression of the whole system thence proceeding, which must prevent the liveliness and quickness of acquirement natural to most children. He thought the evil had been very greatly increased by want of sufficient care in early years, and the unwholesome climate in which she had so long lived, that he wondered her mother had not been advised to send her over to England, adding, with a smile, he was quite sure Mrs. Hamilton would not have refused the charge, anxious as it might have been. And earnestly, not only on account of the child's physical but mental health, did Mrs. Hamilton wish that such

had been the case, and that she had had the care of her niece from earliest infancy ; and how much more would she have wished this, had she known that Mrs. Fortescue had really been advised to do with Ellen as Mr. Maitland had said, but that believing it merely an idle fancy, and persisting too in her own headstrong idea that it was ill-temper not illness which rendered Ellen so disagreeable, she would not stoop so to conquer her unfortunate pride as to ask such a favour of her relatives, and to whom else could she appeal ? Colonel Fortescue had none but distant cousins. She did satisfy a qualm of conscience by once suggesting to her husband—as her own idea, however, not as that of an experienced physician—that as he fancied Ellen was always ill, she might be better in England ; but, as she expected, not only his intense love for his little girl rose up against the idea of separation, but his pride revolted from sending her to claim the pity of relatives who had so completely cast off her parents : yet had he been told it was absolutely necessary for her health and so greatly for her happiness, he would not have hesitated to sacrifice every thought of self. But Eleanor, satisfied that she had done her duty, and delighted that in one respect he was quite as proud as she was, never again referred to the subject, and the physician who had thus advised, from his constant removals, he never chanced to meet.

Great indeed was the amount of childish suffering which this selfish decision on the part of her mother occasioned Ellen. We do not mean the pain of constant languor itself, though that in its full amount our happy healthful young readers cannot have the least idea

of ; they perhaps think it almost a pleasant change, the care and petting and presents so often lavished on a brief decided illness : but that is a very different thing to that kind of suffering which only so affects them as to be dull and heavy, they do not know why, and to make it such a very difficult task to learn the lessons others find so easy ; and such a pain sometimes to move, that they are thought slow and unwilling, and perhaps even idle, when they would gladly run, and help, and work as others ; and so weak sometimes, that tears start at the first harsh or unkind word, and they are thought cross, when they do not in the least feel so ; and this not for a few weeks, but with few exceptions, the trial of months and even years.

And this was Ellen's—which not even the tenderest and most unfailing care of her aunt could entirely guard her from. It is a most difficult thing for those who are strong and healthy themselves to understand and always bear with physical suffering in others. Miss Harcourt, though in general free from anything like prejudice, and ardently desirous to follow up her own and Mrs. Hamilton's ideas of right and wrong, could not so govern her affections as to feel the same towards Ellen as she did towards Edward and the children she had lived with and taught so long. Her task with Ellen required more patience and forbearance and care than with either of the others, and sometimes she could not help believing and acting towards her as if it were wilful idleness and carelessness, not the languor of disease.

With the recollection and evidence of Herbert, who had been delicate from his birth, and who was yet

of such a remarkably-gifted mind, and so bright in aspect, so sweet in temper, that illness seemed to have spiritualized instead of deadened every faculty. She could not understand as Mrs. Hamilton did, the force of circumstances in producing from nearly the same cause two such different effects, nor how it was that complete neglect had engendered more evils than indiscreet indulgence: but that it appeared to have done so, was unhappily only too evident not only to Miss Harcourt but to Mrs. Hamilton. It seemed almost surprising, and certainly a proof of a remarkably good disposition, that Edward appeared so free from great faults, and of such a warm, generous, frank, and *seemingly* unselfish nature, so open to conviction, and to all good impressions, that, except occasional fits of violent passion, there really was, as far as his aunt and uncle could perceive, nothing to complain of. They did not know that he stood in such awe of Mr. Hamilton, from his mother's lessons of his exceeding sternness, that he exercised the greatest control over himself; and he was so excessively fond of Mr. Howard, and his days glided by in such varied and delightful employment, that there was no temptation to do wrong; except certain acts of trifling disobedience, of more consequence from the self-will they betrayed than the acts themselves, but which might have been sources of anxiety to his aunt, and lessened her confidence in him had she known them; but she did not, for Ellen not only constantly concealed, but was the sufferer for him, and so brought reproof and suspicion on herself, which, could the truth have been known, might have been averted. But truth

of act as well as word had never been impressed on Edward; and, therefore, though he was constitutionally too brave to utter a falsehood, too honorable to shield himself at the expense of another, if he knew that other suffered, he had been too long taught to believe that Ellen was his inferior, and must always give up to him, to imagine that he was ever acting deceitfully or unmanfully in permitting her to conceal his acts of disobedience.

There was so much to love and admire in Edward, that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hamilton imagined the real weakness of his character—that those loveable qualities all sprung from natural impulse, unsustained by anything like principle. The quickness and apparent fervour with which he received the religious impressions they and Mr. Howard sought so earnestly to instil, in the short time that was allowed them before he entered the navy, they augured so hopefully from, that not only his preceptor and uncle, but his ever anxious aunt, looked forward to his career with scarcely a doubt as to its probity and honour.

Ellen caused her infinitely more anxiety. There was a disregard to truth, a want of openness and candour, which, though Mrs. Hamilton believed the effects of neglect and extreme timidity, both her husband and Miss Harcourt feared were natural. Much indeed sprung from the poor child's mistaken idea of the nature and solemnity of the promise she had made her mother, and her constant watchfulness and determination to shield Edward. For the disregard to truth her mother had indeed alone been answerable. Ellen's naturally very timid character required the inculcation of a high firm

principle, to enable her so to conquer herself as to speak the truth, even if she suffered from it. It was only indeed in extreme cases of fear—and never to her father that she had ever spoken falsely; but to Mrs. Hamilton's high principles, which by extreme diligence and care she had as successfully imparted to her own children, even concealment was often an acted untruth, and of this fault and equivocation Ellen was but too often guilty; exciting Miss Harcourt's and Caroline's prejudices yet more against her. The latter with all her faults never swerved from the rigid truth, and had a strong contempt and dislike towards all those who did—except her friend Annie, who, as she always took care to speak the truth to her, she did not suspect of being less careful than herself. Emmeline, who had had some difficulty in restraining her love of exaggeration, and also in so conquering her own timidity and fear as always to speak the truth, only pitied Ellen, but did not love her the less.

Of course it was not till some months had passed that these lights and shadows of character in the orphans, and in the opinions they called forth in those around them, could be discovered: but notwithstanding she stood almost alone in her opinion, notwithstanding there was very little outward evidence that she was correct, Mrs. Hamilton believed there was a great deal more in her niece than was discernible. She seemed to possess a strength, almost an intensity, of feeling and warmth of affection, which, if properly guided, would effectually aid in removing the childish errors engendered by neglect; and it was this belief which not only enabled her to bear calmly the anxiety and care, and

often pain, which those faults and their compelled correction occasioned, but actually to love her niece, if possible, still more than Edward, and very nearly with the same amount of quiet but intense affection which she felt for her own children.

CHAPTER V.

A YOUNG GENTLEMAN IN A PASSION.—A WALK.—
A SCENE OF DISTRESS.

ONE very fine morning in May, Mrs. Hamilton invited Edward to join her in a walk, intending also to call at Moorlands and Greville Manor on their way. The lads were released for a few days from their attendance on Mr. Howard, that gentleman having been summoned on some clerical business to Exeter. Percy was to accompany his father on an equestrian excursion; Herbert had been commissioned by Emmeline some days before to take some books to Mary Greville, and had looked forward himself to spending a morning with her. Edward, delighted at being selected as his aunt's companion, prepared with haste and glee for his excursion. Robert was, however, unfortunately not at hand to give him a clean pair of shoes (he had already spoiled two pair that morning by going into the stream which ran through the park to sail a newly-rigged frigate), and angry at the delay, fearing that his aunt would not wait for him, he worked himself into such a violent passion, that when Robert did appear he gave vent to more abusive language than he had ever yet ventured to use, concluding by hurling both his discarded shoes at the domestic, who only escaped a severe blow by starting aside, and permitting them to go through the window.

"Robert, leave the room : I desire that you will not again give your assistance to Master Fortescue till he knows how to ask it," was Mrs. Hamilton's most unexpected interference, and Edward so started at her voice and look, that his passion was suddenly calmed.

"Finish your toilette, and when you have found your shoes and put them away, you may join me in the breakfast-room, Edward. I only wait your pleasure."

And never did Edward leave her presence more gladly. Shame had suddenly conquered anger, and, though his chest still heaved and his cheeks were still flushed, he did not utter another word till nearly a quarter of a mile on their walk. Twice he had looked up in his aunt's face as if about to speak, but the expression was so very grave, that he felt strangely afraid to proceed. At length he exclaimed—

"You are displeased with me, dear Aunt ; but indeed I could not help feeling angry."

"I am still more sorry than displeased, Edward ; I had hoped you were learning more control, and to know your duty to a domestic better. Your uncle—"

"Oh, pray do not tell him !" implored Edward, "and I will ask Robert's pardon the moment I go home."

"I certainly shall not complain of you to him, Edward, if my arguments can convince you of your error ; but if you are only to ask Robert's pardon for fear of your uncle, I would rather you should not do so. Tell me the truth ; if you were quite sure your uncle would know nothing about it, would you still ask Robert's pardon ?"

Edward unhesitatingly answered "No !"

"And why not ?"

"Because I think he ought to ask mine for keeping me waiting as he did, and for being insolent first to me."

"He did not keep you waiting above five minutes, and that was my fault not his, as I was employing him; and as for insolence, can you tell me what he said?" Edward hesitated.

"I do not remember the exact words, but I know he called me impatient, and if I were, he had no right to tell me so."

"Nor did he. I heard all that passed, and I could not help thinking how very far superior was Robert, a poor country youth, to the young gentleman who abused him."

The colour rose to Edward's temples, but he set his teeth and clenched his hand, to prevent any farther display of anger; and his aunt, after attentively observing him, continued—

"He said that his young master Percy never required impossibilities, and though often impatient never abused him. You heard the word, and feeling you had been so, believed he applied it to yourself."

"But in what can he be my superior?" asked Edward, in a low voice, as if still afraid his passion would regain ascendancy.

"I will answer your question by another, Edward. Suppose any one had used abusive terms towards you, and contemptuously desired you to get out of their sight, how would you have answered?"

"I would have struck him to the earth," replied Edward, passionately, and quite forgetting his wished-

for control. "Neither equal nor superior should dare speak so to me again."

"And what prevented Robert acting in the same manner? Do you think he has no feeling?—that he is incapable of such emotions as pain or anger?"

Edward stood for a minute quite still and silent.

"I did not think anything about it," he said at length; "but I certainly supposed I had a right to say what I pleased to one so far beneath me."

"And in what is Robert so far beneath you?"

"He is a servant and I am a gentleman; above him in birth, rank—"

"Stop, Edward! did you make yourself a gentleman? Is it any credit to you individually to be higher in the world, and receive a better education than Robert?"

Edward was again silent, and his aunt continued to talk to him so kindly yet so earnestly, that at length he exclaimed—

"I feel I have indeed been wrong, dear Aunt; but what can I do to prove to Robert I am really sorry for having treated him so ill?"

"Are you really sorry, Edward, or do you only say this for fear of your uncle's displeasure?"

"Indeed, I had quite forgotten him," replied Edward, earnestly; "I deserve his anger, and would willingly expose myself to it, if it would redeem my fault."

"I would rather see you endeavour earnestly to restrain your passions, my dear boy, than inflict any such pain upon you. It will be a great pleasure to me if you can really so conquer yourself as to apologise to Robert; and I think the pain of so doing will enable

you more easily to remember all we have been saying, than if you weakly shrink from it. The life you have chosen makes me even more anxious that you should become less passionate—than were you to remain longer with me;—I fear you will so often suffer seriously from it.”

“I very often make resolutions never to be in a passion again,” returned Edward, sorrowfully; “but whenever anything provokes me, something seems to come in my throat, and I am compelled to give way.”

“You will not be able to conquer your fault, my dear Edward, without great perseverance; but remember, the more difficult the task, the greater the reward; and that you *can* control anger I have, even during our walk, had a proof.”

Edward looked up surprised.

“Did you not feel very angry when I said Robert was your superior?”

“Yes,” replied Edward, blushing deeply.

“And yet you successfully checked your rising passion, for fear of offending me. I cannot be always near you; but, my dear boy, you must endeavour to remember that lesson I have tried to teach you so often—that you are never *alone*. You cannot even think an angry thought, much less speak an abusive word and commit the most trifling act of passion, without offending God. If you would but ask for His help, and recollect that to offend Him is far more terrible than to incur the displeasure of either your uncle or myself, I think you would find your task much easier, than if you attempted it, trusting in your own strength alone, and only for fear of man.”

Edward did not make any reply, but his countenance

expressed such earnest thought and softened feeling, that Mrs. Hamilton determined on not interrupting it by calling at Moorlands as she had intended, and so turned in the direction of Greville Manor. They walked on for some little time in silence, gradually ascending one of those steep and narrow but green and flowery lanes peculiar to Devonshire; and on reaching the summit of the hill, and pausing a moment by the little gate that opened on a rich meadow, through which their path lay, an exclamation of "How beautiful!" burst from Edward.

Fields of alternate red and green sloped down to the river's edge, the green bearing the glistening colour peculiar to May, the red from the full rich soil betraying that the plough had but lately been there, and both contrasting beautifully with the limpid waters, whose deep azure seemed to mock the very heavens. The Dart from that point seemed no longer a meandering river: it was so encompassed by thick woods and fertile hills that it resembled a lake, to which there was neither outlet nor inlet, save from the land. The trees all presented that exquisite variety of green peculiar to May, and so lofty was the slope on which they grew, that some seemed to touch the very sky, while others bent gracefully over the water, which their thick branches nearly touched. The hills themselves presented a complete mosaic of red and green; the fields divided by high hedges, from which the oak and elm and beech and ash would start up, of growth so superb as to have the semblance of a cultivated park, not of natural woodland.

Greville Manor, an Elizabethan building, stood on

their right, surrounded by its ancient woods, which, though lovely still, Mr. Greville's excesses had already shorn of some of their finest timber. Some parts of the river were in complete shade from the overhanging branches, while beyond them would stretch the bright blue of heaven : in other parts, a stray sunbeam would dart through an opening in the thick branches, and shine like a bright spot in the surrounding darkness ; and farther on, the cloudless sun so flung down his full refulgence, that the moving waters flashed and sparkled like burning gems.

"Is it not beautiful, dear Aunt? Sometimes I feel as if I were not half so passionate in the open air as in the house : can you tell me why?"

"Not exactly, Edward," she replied, smiling ; "but I am very pleased to hear you say so, and to find that you can admire such a lovely scene as this. To my feelings, the presence of a loving God is so impressed upon his works ; we can so distinctly trace goodness, and love, and power, in the gift of such a beautiful world, that I feel still more how wrong it is to indulge in vexation, or care, or anxiety, when in the midst of a beautiful country, than when at home ; and perhaps it is something of the same feeling working in you, though you do not know how to define it."

"But *you* can never do or feel anything wrong, dear Aunt," said Edward, looking with surprised inquiry in her face.

"Indeed, my dear boy, I know that I very often have wrong thoughts and feelings ; and that only my Father in Heaven's infinite mercy enables me to overcome them. It would be very sad, if I were as faulty, and as easily

led into error, as you and your cousins may be, when I have had so many more years to think and try to improve in; but just in the same way as you have duties to perform and feelings to overcome, so have I; and if I fail in the endeavour to lead you all in the better and happier path—or feel too much anxiety, or shrink from giving myself pain, when compelled to correct a fault in either of you, I am just as likely to incur the displeasure of our Father in Heaven as you are when you are passionate or angry; and perhaps still more so, for the more capable we are of knowing and doing our duty, the more wrong we are when we fail in it, even in thought.”

There was so much in this reply to surprise Edward, it seemed so to fill his mind with new ideas, that he continued his walk in absolute silence. That his aunt could ever fail as she seemed to say she had and did, and even still at times found it difficult to do right, was very strange; but yet somehow it seemed to comfort him, and to inspire him with a sort of courage to emulate her, and conquer his difficulties. He had fancied, that she could not possibly understand how difficult it was for him always to be good; but when he found that she could do so even from her own experience, her words appeared endowed with double force, and he loved her, and looked up to her more than ever.

Ten minutes more brought them to the gothic lodge of the Manor, and instead of seeking the front entrance, Mrs. Hamilton led the way to the flower-garden, on which Mrs. Greville’s usual morning-room opened by a glass-door.

“Herbert was to tell Mary of our intended visit; I

wonder she is not watching for me as usual," observed Mrs. Hamilton, somewhat anxiously, and her anxiety increased, as on nearing the half open door she saw poor Mary, her head leaning against Herbert, deluged in tears. Mrs. Greville was not there, though the books, work, and maps upon the table told of their morning's employment having been the same as usual. Herbert was earnestly endeavouring to speak comfort, but evidently without success; and Mary was in general so controlled, that her present grief betrayed some very much heavier trial than usual.

"Is your mother ill, my dear Mary? What can have happened to agitate you so painfully?" she inquired, as at the first sound of her voice the poor girl sprung towards her, and tried to say how very glad she was that she had come just then; but the words were inarticulate from sobs; and Mrs. Hamilton, desiring Edward to amuse himself in the garden, made her sit down by her, and told her not to attempt to check her tears, but to let them have free vent a few minutes, and then to try and tell her what had occurred. It was a sad tale for a child to tell, and as Mrs. Hamilton's previous knowledge enabled her to gather more from it than Mary's broken narrative permitted, we will give it in our own words.

Mr. Greville had been at home for a month, a quarter of which time the good humour which some unusually successful bets had excited, lasted; but no longer. His amusement then consisted, as usual, in trying every method to annoy and irritate his wife, and in endeavouring to make his son exactly like himself. Young as the boy was, scarcely twelve, he took him to scenes of riot

and feasting, which the society of some boon companions, unhappily near neighbours, permitted; and though Alfred's cheek became pale, his eye haggard, and his temper uneven, his initiation was fraught with such a new species of excitement and pleasure, that it rejoiced and encouraged his father in the same measure as it agonized his mother, and, for her sake, poor Mary.

That morning Alfred had declared his intention of visiting a large fair, which, with some races of but ill repute, from the bad company they collected, was to be held at a neighbouring town, and told his father to prepare for a large demand on his cash, as he meant to try his hand at all the varieties of gaming which the scene presented. Mr. Greville laughed heartily at what he called the boy's right spirit, and promised him all he required; but there was a quivering on her mother's lip, a deadly paleness on her cheek, that spoke volumes of suffering to the heart of the observant Mary, who sat trembling beside her. Still Mrs. Greville did not speak till her husband left the room; but then, as Alfred was about to follow him, she caught hold of his hand, and implored him, with such a tone and look of agony, only to listen to her, for her sake to give up his intended pleasure; that, almost frightened by an emotion which in his gentle mother he had scarcely ever seen, and suddenly remembering that he had lately been indeed most unkind and neglectful to her, he threw his arms round her neck, and promised with tears, that if it gave her so much pain, he would not go; and so sincere was his feeling at the moment that, had there been no tempter near, he would, in all probability, have kept his word. But the moment Mr. Greville heard from his son his change of intention

and its cause, he so laughed at his ridiculous folly, so sneered at his want of spirit in preferring his mother's whims to his father's pleasures, that, as could not fail to be the case, every better feeling fled. This ought to have been enough ; but it was too good an opportunity to vent his ill-temper on his wife, to be neglected. He sought her, where she was superintending Mary's lessons, and for nearly an hour poured upon her the most fearful abuse and cutting taunts, ending by declaring, that all the good she had done by her saintly eloquence, was to banish her son from her presence, whenever he left home, as in future Alfred should be his companion ; and that he should begin that very day. Mrs. Greville neither moved nor spoke in reply ; and the expression of her countenance was so sternly calm, that poor Mary felt as if she dared not give way to the emotion with which her heart was bursting.

Mr. Greville left the room, and they heard him pe-remptorily desire the housekeeper to put up some of Master Alfred's clothes. In a perfectly composed voice Mrs. Greville desired Mary to proceed with the exercise she was writing, and emulating her firmness, she tried to obey. Fortunately her task was writing, for to have spoken or read aloud would, she felt, have been impossible. So full half an hour passed, and then hasty footsteps were heard in the hall, and the joyous voice of Alfred exclaiming—

“Let me wish Mamma and Mary good-by, Papa.”

“I have not another moment to spare,” was the reply.

“You have kept me long enough, and must be quicker next time ; come along, my boy.”

The rapid tread of horse's hoofs speedily followed the

sullen clang with which the hall-door closed, and as rapidly faded away in the distance. With an irresistible impulse, Mary raised her eyes to her mother's face; a bright red flush had risen to her temples, but her lips were perfectly colourless, and her hand tightly pressed her heart, but this only lasted a minute, for the next she had fallen quite senseless on the floor. Her poor child hung over her almost paralysed with terror, and so long did the faint last, that she was conveyed to her own room, partially undressed, and laid on her bed, before she at all recovered. A brief while she had clasped Mary to her bosom, as if in her was indeed her only earthly comfort, and then in a faint voice desired to be left quite alone. Mary had flung herself on the neck of the sympathising Herbert Hamilton (who had arrived just in the confusion, attendant on Mrs. Greville's unusual illness), and wept there in all the uncontrolled violence of early sorrow.

Mrs. Hamilton remained some time with her afflicted friend, for so truly could she sympathize with her, that her society brought with it the only solace Mrs. Greville was capable of realizing from human companionship.

"It is not for myself I murmur," were the only words, that in that painful interview might have even seemed like complaint; "but for my poor child. How is her fragile frame and gentle spirit to endure through trials such as these; oh, Emmeline, to lose both, and through their father!"

And difficult indeed did it seem to realize the cause of such terrible dispensation; but happily for Mrs. Greville, she could still look up in love and trust, even when below all of comfort as of joy seemed departed; and in a few days she was enabled to resume her usual avocations,

and, by an assumption of cheerfulness and constant employment, to restore some degree of peace and happiness to her child.

Neither Herbert nor Edward seemed inclined to converse on their walk home, and Mrs. Hamilton was so engrossed in thought for Mrs. Greville, that she did not feel disposed to speak either. Herbert was contrasting his father with Mary's, and with such a vivid sense of his own happier lot, that he felt almost oppressed with the thought, he was not, he never could be, grateful enough; for what had he done, to be so much more blessed?—And when Mr. Hamilton, who, wondering at their long absence, had come out to meet them, put his arm affectionately round him, and asked him what could possibly make him look so pale and pensive, the boy's excited feelings completely overpowered him. He buried his face on his father's shoulder, and burst into tears; and then leaving his mother to explain it, for he felt quite sure she could, without his telling her, darted away, and never stopped till he found himself in the sanctuary of his own room; and there he remained, trying to calm himself by earnest thought and almost unconscious prayer, till the dinner-bell summoned him, to rejoin his family, which he did quiet and gentle, but cheerful, as usual.

Edward did not forget the thoughts of the morning, but the struggle so to subdue his pride as to apologize to Robert, seemed very much more difficult when he was no longer hearing his aunt's earnest words; but he *did* conquer himself, and the fond approving look, with which he was rewarded, gave him such a glowing feeling of pleasure, as almost to lessen the pain of his humiliation.

CHAPTER VI.

CECIL GRAHAME'S PHILOSOPHY.—AN ERROR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.—A MYSTERY AND A CONFIDENCE.

A FEW days after the events of the last chapter, Mrs. Hamilton, accompanied by Percy, called at Moorlands. Cecil Grahame was playing in the garden, and Percy remained with him, his good-nature often making him a companion, though there was nearly six years difference in their age.

"Are you going to T— on Thursday, Percy? There will be such fine doings. Races and the county fair, and wild beasts and shows, and everything delightful; of course you will go?"

"I do not think it at all likely," replied young Hamilton.

"No!" repeated Cecil, much astonished. "Why, I was only saying the other day how much I should like to be as old as you are; it must be so delightful to be one's own master."

"I do not consider myself my own master yet, Cecil. Sometimes I wish I were; at others, I think I am much better as I am. And as for this fair, Mr. Howard will be back to-morrow, so there is no chance of my going."

"Why is there no such thing as the possibility of a holiday, Percy?" replied Cecil, with great glee; "or

perhaps" he added, laughing, "your Papa is like mine, and does not allow such freaks; thinks it wrong to go to such places, acting against morality, and such out of the way ideas."

"Are these Mr. Grahame's opinions?" inquired Percy, almost sternly.

"Why ye—yes—why do you look at me so, Percy? I am sure I said no harm; I only repeated what I have heard Mamma say continually."

"That is not the very least excuse for your disrespect to your father; and if he think thus, I wonder you should talk of going to the races; you cannot have his permission."

"Oh, but Mamma has promised if I am a good boy till then, and she can manage it, I shall go; for she cannot see any harm in it. And as for waiting for Papa's permission—if I did, I should never go anywhere. He is so unkind, that I am always afraid of speaking or even of playing, when he is in the room."

"You are a silly boy, Cecil," replied young Hamilton; "Believe me, you do not know your best friend. I should be very sorry to feel thus towards my father."

"Oh! but yours and mine are very different sort of people. Your Papa never punishes you, or refuses you his permission, when you wish particularly to do anything, or go anywhere."

"If Papa thinks my wishes foolish, or liable to lead me into error, he does refuse me without scruple, Cecil. And though I am old enough now, I hope so to conduct myself as to avoid actual punishment: when I was as young as you are, Papa very frequently punished me, both for my violence and pride."

"But then he was kind to you afterwards. Now I

should not so much mind Papa's severity when I am naughty, if he would only be kind or take some notice of me when I am good. But has Mr. Hamilton told you not to go to the races?"

"Not exactly: he has merely said he thinks it a day most unprofitably wasted; and that the gambling and excesses always the attendant of races, are not fit scenes for young persons. Were I to take my horse and go, he would not, perhaps, be actually displeased, as I am old enough now, he says, in some things to judge for myself; but I should be acting against his principles, which, just now, I am not inclined to do, for I am sure to suffer from it afterwards."

"Well, all I can say is, that when I am as old as you are, Percy, I shall certainly consider myself under no one. I hope I shall be at Eton by that time, and then we shall see if Cecil Grahame has not some spirit in him. I would not be tied down to Oakwood, and to Mr. Howard's humdrum lessons, as you are, Percy, for worlds."

"Take care that Cecil Grahame's spirit does not effervesce so much, as to make him, when at Eton, wish himself back at Moorlands," replied Percy, laughing heartily at his young companion's grotesque attempts at self-consequence, by placing his cap dandily on his head, flourishing his cane, and trying to make himself look taller. Cecil took his laugh, however, in good part, and they continued in amicable conversation till Mrs. Hamilton summoned Percy to attend her home.

Our readers have, perhaps, discovered that Percy, this day, was not quite as lively as usual. If they have not, his mother did; for, strange to say, he walked by

her side silent and dispirited. His thoughtlessness very often led him into error and its disagreeable consequences ; and, fearing this had again been the case, she playfully inquired the cause of his most unusual abstraction. He coloured, but evaded the question, and successfully roused himself to talk. His mother was not anxious, for she had such perfect confidence in him, that she knew if he had committed error, he would redeem it, and that his own good feelings and high principles would prevent its recurrence.

It so happened, however, that young Hamilton, by a series of rather imprudent actions, had plunged himself into such a very unusual and disagreeable position, as not very well to know how to extricate himself from it, without a full confession to his father ; which, daringly brave as in general he was, he felt almost as if he really had not the courage to make. One of Mr. Hamilton's most imperative commands was, that his sons should never incur a debt, and, to prevent the temptation, their monthly allowance was an ample one, and fully permitted any recreative indulgences they might desire.

Now Percy was rather inclined to extravagance, from thoughtlessness and a profuse generosity, which had often caused him such annoyance as to make him resolve again and again to follow his father's advice, and keep some accounts of his expenditure, as a slight check on himself. The admiration for beauty in the fine arts, which his mother had so sedulously cultivated, had had only one bad effect ; and that was that his passion for prints and paintings, and illustrated and richly-bound volumes, sometimes carried him beyond

bounds, and very often occasioned regret, that he had not examined the letterpress of such works, as well as their engravings and bindings. He had given orders to Mr. Harris, a large fancy stationer, librarian and publisher of T—, to procure for him a set of engravings, whose very interesting subjects and beautiful workmanship Mr. Grahame had so vividly described to him, that young Hamilton felt to do without them till his father or he himself should visit the metropolis, and so judge of their worth themselves, was quite impossible. The order was given without the least regard to price. They arrived at the end of the month, and the young gentleman, to his extreme astonishment, discovered that his month's allowance had been so expended, as not to leave him a half quarter of the necessary sum. What to do he did not very well know. Mr. Harris had had great difficulty in procuring the prints, and of course he was bound in honour to take them. If he waited till he could pay for them, he must sacrifice the whole of one month's allowance, and then how could he keep free from debt till the next? As for applying to his father, he shrunk from it with actual pain. How could he ask his ever kind and indulgent parent to discharge a debt incurred by such a thoughtless act of unnecessary extravagance? Mr. Harris made very light of it, declaring that, if Mr. Percy did not pay him for a twelvemonth, it was of no consequence; he would trust him for any sum or any time he liked. But to make no attempt to liquidate his debt was as impossible as to speak to his father. So, after a violent struggle with his pride, which did not at all like the idea of betraying his inability to pay the whole, or of asking a favour of Mr.

Harris, he agreed to pay his debt by instalments, and so in two or three months, at the very latest, discharge the whole.

One week afterwards he received his month's allowance, and riding over directly to the town relieved his conscience of half its load. To have only half his usual sum, however, for monthly expenditure caused him so many checks and annoyances as to make him hate the very sight of the prints whose possession he had so coveted, but he looked forward to the next month to be free at least of Mr. Harris. The idea of disobedience to his father in incurring a debt at all causing him more annoyance than all the rest.

Again the first day of the month came round, and putting the full sum required in his purse, he set off, but on his way encountered such a scene of distress, that every thought fled from his mind, except how to relieve it. He accompanied the miserable half-famished man to a hut in which lay a seemingly dying woman with a new-born babe, and two or three small half-starved, half-naked children,—listened to their story, which was really one of truth and misfortune, not of whining deceit, poured the whole contents of his purse into their laps, and rode off to T—, to find not Mr. Harris but Mr. Maitland, and implore him to see what his skill would do for the poor woman. He encountered that gentleman at the outskirts of the town, told his story, and was so delighted at Mr. Maitland's willing promise to go directly, and also to report the case to those who would relieve it, that he never thought of anything else till he found himself directly opposite Mr. Harris's shop, and his bounding heart sunk suddenly down as

impelled by a weight of lead. The conviction flashed upon him that he had been giving away money which was actually not his own; and the deed which had been productive of so much internal happiness, now seemed to reproach and condemn him. He rode back without even seeking Mr. Harris, for what could he tell him as the reason of his non-payment? certainly not his having given it away.

The first of May, which was his birthday, he had been long engaged to spend with some young men and lads who were to have a grand game of cricket, a jovial dinner, an adjournment to some evening amusement, and, to conclude the day, a gay supper, with glees and songs. Mr. Hamilton had rather wished Percy to leave the party after dinner and had told him so, merely, however, as a preference, not a command, but giving him permission to use his own discretion. Percy knew there would be several expenses attendant on the day, but still he had promised so long to be one of the party, which all had declared would be nothing without him, and his own inclinations so urged him to join it, that it seemed to him utterly impossible to draw back, especially as he could give no excuse for doing so. How could he say that he could not afford it? when he was, or ought to have been, nearly the richest of the party; and what would his father think?

He went. The day was thoroughly delightful, and so exciting, that though he had started from home with the intention of leaving them after dinner, he could not resist the pleadings of his companions and his own wishes, and remained. At supper alone excitement and revelry seemed to have gained the upper hand, and

Percy, though steady in entirely abstaining from all excess, was not quite so guarded as usual. A clergyman had lately appeared at T—, whose appearance, manners, and opinions had given more than usual food for gossip, and much uncharitableness. His cloth indeed ought to have protected him, but it rather increased the satire, sarcasm, and laughter which he excited. He was brought forward by the thoughtless youths of Percy's party, quizzed unmercifully, made the object of some clever caricatures and satires, and though young Hamilton at first kept aloof, he could not resist the contagion. He dashed off about half-a-dozen verses of such remarkably witty and clever point, that they were received with roars of applause, and an unanimous request for distribution; but this he positively refused, and put them up with one or two other poems of more innocent wit, in which he was fond of indulging, into his pocket.

The day closed, and the next morning brought with it so many regrets, and such a confused recollection of the very unusual excitement of the previous evening, that he was glad to dismiss the subject from his mind, and threw his satire, as he believed, into the fire. In fact, he was so absorbed with the disagreeable conviction that he could only pay Mr. Harris a third of his remaining debt, trifling as in reality it was, that he thought of nothing else. Now Mr. Harris was the editor and publisher of rather a clever weekly paper, and Percy happened to be in his parlour waiting to speak to him, while he was paying a contributor.

"I wish my head were clever enough to get out of your debt in that comfortable way," he said, half laughing, as the gentleman left them together.

"I wish all my customers were as desirous of paying their large debts as you are, your small ones," was Mr. Harris's reply. "But I have heard something of your clever verses, Mr. Percy; if you will let me see some, I really may be able to oblige you, as you seem so very anxious to have nothing more to do with me—"

"In the way of debt, not of purchases, Mr. Harris; and I assure you, I am not thinking so much about you, as of my own disobedience. I will send you my papers, only you must give me your word not to publish them with my name."

"They will not be worth so much," replied Mr. Harris, smiling.

"Only let me feel they have helped to discharge my debt, or at least let me know how much more is wanted to do so, and I will worship the muses henceforth," replied Percy, with almost his natural gaiety, for he felt he wrote better verses than those Mr. Harris had been so liberally paying for; and the idea of feeling free again was so very delightful, that, after receiving Mr. Harris's solemn promise not to betray his authorship, he galloped home, more happy than he had been for some days.

Mr. Harris had said he must have them that evening, and Robert was leaving for the town, as his young master entered the house. He hastily put up his portfolio, and sent it off. His conscience was so perfectly free from keeping anything that he afterwards had cause to regret, that he did not think of looking them over, and great was his delight, when a few lines arrived from Mr. Harris, speaking in the highest terms of his talent, and saying, that the set of verses he had selected, even without

the attraction of his name, would entirely liquidate his trifling debt.

For the next few days Percy trod on air. He had resolved on waiting till the poem appeared, and then, as he really had discharged his debt, take courage and confess the whole to his father, for his idea of truth made him shrink from any farther concealment. He hoped and believed that his father would regard the pain and constant annoyance he had been enduring so long, as sufficient penalty for his disobedience, and after a time give him back the confidence, which he feared must at his first confession be withdrawn.

What, then, was his grief, his vexation, almost his despair, when he recognized in the poem selected, the verses he thought and believed he had burned the morning after they were written; and which in print, and read by his sober self, seemed such a heartless, glaring, cruel insult, not only on a fellow-creature, but a minister of God, that he felt almost overwhelmed. What could he do? Mr. Harris was not to blame, for he had made no reservation as to the contents of his portfolio. His name, indeed, was not to them, and only having been read lightly once to his companions of that hateful supper—for so he now felt it—almost all of whom were not perfectly sober, there was a chance of their never being recognized as his, and as their subject did not live near any town where the paper was likely to circulate, might never meet his eye. But all this was poor comfort. The paper was very seldom seen at Oakwood, but its contents were often spoken of before his parents, and how could he endure a reference to those verses, how bear this accumulation of concealment, and, as he felt,

deceit, and all sprung from the one thoughtless act of ordering an expensive and unnecessary indulgence, without sufficient consideration how it was to be paid. To tell his father, avow himself the author of such a satire, and on such a subject, he could not. Could he tell his mother, and implore her intercession? that seemed like a want of confidence in his father—no—if he ever could gain courage to confess it, it should be to Mr. Hamilton alone; but the more he thought, the more for the first time his courage failed. It was only the day before his visit to Lady Helen's that he had discovered this accumulation of misfortune, and therefore it was not much wonder he was so dispirited.—Two days afterwards Herbert, with a blushing cheek and very timid voice, asked his father to grant him a great favour. He was almost afraid to ask it, he said, but he hoped and believed his parent would trust his assurance that it was for nothing improper. It was that he might be from home the next day unattended for several hours. He should go on horseback, but he was so accustomed to ride, and his horse was so steady, he hoped he might be allowed to go alone. Mr. Hamilton looked very much surprised, as did all present. That the quiet, studious Herbert should wish to give up his favorite pursuits, so soon too after Mr. Howard's return, and go on what appeared such a mysterious excursion, was something so extraordinary, that various expressions of surprise broke from his sisters and Edward. Percy did look up, but made no observation. Mr. Hamilton only paused, however, to consult his wife's face, and then replied—

“You certainly have mystified us, my dear boy; but

I freely grant you my consent, and if I can read your mother's face aright, hers is not far distant. You are now nearly fifteen, and never once from your birth has your conduct given me an hour's pain or uneasiness ; I have therefore quite sufficient confidence in your integrity and steadiness to trust you, as you wish, alone. I will not even ask your intentions, for I am sure they will not lead you into wrong."

"Thank you again and again, my own dear Father. I hope I shall never do anything to forfeit your confidence," replied Herbert so eagerly, that his cheeks flushed still deeper, and his eyes glistened ; then throwing himself on the stool at his mother's feet, he said, pleadingly, "Will you too trust me, dearest Mother, and promise me not to be anxious, if I do not appear till after our dinner-hour?—promise me this, or I shall have no pleasure in my expedition."

"Most faithfully," replied Mrs. Hamilton, fondly. "I trust my Herbert almost as I would his father ; I do not say as much for this young man, nor for that," she added, playfully laying her hand on Percy's shoulder, and laughing at Edward, who was so excessively amused at the sage Herbert's turning truant, that he was giving vent to a variety of most grotesque antics of surprise. Percy sighed so heavily, that his mother was startled.

"I did not intend to call such a very heavy sigh, my boy," she said. "In an emergency I would trust you quite as implicitly as Herbert ; but you have often yourself wished you had his steadiness."

"Indeed, I do, Mother ; I wish I were more like him in everything," exclaimed Percy, far more despondingly than usual.

"You will be steady all in time, my boy, I have not the very slightest fear; and as I like variety, even in my sons, I would rather retain my Percy, with all his boyish errors, than have even another Herbert. So, pray do not look so sad, or I shall fancy I have given you pain, when I only spoke in jest."

Percy threw his arm round her waist, and kissed her two or three times, without saying a word, and when he started up and said, in his usual gay tone, that, as he was not going to turn truant the next day, he must go and finish some work, she saw tears in his eyes. That something was wrong, she felt certain, but still she trusted in his candour and integrity, and did not express her fears even to her husband.

The morrow came. Percy and Edward went to Mr. Howard's, and Herbert at half-past nine mounted his quiet horse, and after affectionally embracing his mother, and again promising care and steadiness, departed. He had risen at five this morning, and studied till breakfast so earnestly, that a double portion was prepared for the next day. He had said, as he was starting, that, if he might remain out so long, he should like to call at Greville Manor on his way back, take tea there, and return home in the cool of the evening.

"Your next request, my very modest son, will be, I suppose, to stay out all night," replied Mrs. Hamilton; "and that certainly will be refused. This is the last to which I shall consent—off with you, my boy, and enjoy yourself."

But Herbert did not expect to enjoy himself half as much as if he had gone to Mr. Howard's as usual. He did not like to mention his real object, for it appeared

as if the chances were so much against its attainment, and if it were fulfilled, to speak about it would be equally painful, from its having been an act of kindness.

The day passed quietly, and a full hour before prayers Herbert was seen riding through the grounds, and when he entered the usual sitting-room, he looked so happy, so animated that, if his parents had felt any anxiety—which they had not—it would have vanished at once. But though they were contented not to ask him any questions, the young party were not, and, except by Percy (who seemed intently engaged with a drawing), he was attacked on all sides, and, to add to their mirth, Mr. Hamilton took the part of the curious, his wife that of her son.

“Ah, Mamma may well take Herbert’s part,” exclaimed the little joyous Emmeline; “for of course she knows all about it; Herbert would never keep it from her.”

“Indeed, I do not!” and “Indeed, I have not even told Mamma!” was the reply from both at the same moment, but the denial was useless; and the prayer-bell rung, before any satisfaction for the curious could be obtained, except that from half-past six Herbert had been very quietly at Mrs. Greville’s.

That night, as Percy sat in gloomy meditation, in his own room, before he retired to bed, he felt a hand laid gently on his shoulder, and looking up, beheld his brother—

“Have you lost all interest in me, Percy?” asked Herbert, with almost melancholy reproach. “If you had expressed one word of inquiry as to my proceedings, I should have told you all, without the slightest reserve.

You have never before been so little concerned for me, and indeed I do not like it."

"I could not ask your confidence, my dear Herbert, when for the last three months I have been wanting in openness to you. Indeed, annoyed as I am with my own folly, I was as deeply interested as all the rest in your expedition, though I guessed, its object could be nothing but kindness; but how could I ask your secret, when I was so reserved with you."

"Then do not let us have secrets from each other any longer, dearest Percy," pleaded Herbert, twining his arm round his neck, and looking with affectionate confidence in his face. I do not at all see why my secret must comprise more worth and kindness than yours. You talk of folly, and I have fancied for some days that you are not quite happy; but you often blame yourself so much more than you deserve, that you do not frighten me in the least. You said, last night, you wished you were more like me; but, indeed, if you were I should be very sorry. What would become of me without your mirth and liveliness, and your strength and ever-working care to protect me from anything like pain, either mentally or bodily? I should not like my own self for my brother at all."

"Nor I myself for mine," replied Percy, so strangely cheered, that he almost laughed at Herbert's very novel idea, and after listening with earnest interest to his story, took courage, and told his own. Herbert in this instance, however, could not comfort him as successfully as usual. The satire was the terrible thing; everything else but that, even the disobedience of the debt, he thought might be easily remedied by an open confession

to his father; but that unfortunate oversight in not looking over his papers before he sent them to Mr. Harris, the seeming utter impossibility to stop their circulation, was to both these single-hearted, high-principled lads something almost overwhelming. It did not in the least signify to either that Percy might never be known as their author. Herbert could not tell him what to do, except that, if he could but get sufficient courage, to tell their father; even if he could not help them, he was sure it would be a great weight off his mind, and then he gently reproached him for not coming to him to help him discharge his debt; it was surely much better, to owe a trifle to his brother than to Mr. Harris.

"And, to gratify my extravagance, deprive you of some much purer and better pleasure!" replied Percy, indignantly. "No, no, Bertie; never expect me to do any such thing; I would rather suffer the penalty of my own faults fifty times over! I wish to heaven I were a child again," he added, with almost comic ruefulness, "and had Mamma to come to me every night, as she used to do, before I went to sleep. It was so easy then to tell her all I had done wrong in the course of the day, and then one error never grew into so many: but now—it must be out before Sunday, I suppose—I never can talk to my Father as I do on that day, unless it is;—but go to bed, dear Herbert; I shall have your pale cheeks upon my conscience to-morrow too!"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. MORTON'S STORY.—A CONFESSION.—A YOUNG
PLEADER.—GENEROSITY NOT ALWAYS JUSTICE.

"Do you remember, Emmeline, a Mr. Morton, who officiated for Mr. Howard at Aveling five or six weeks ago?" asked Mr. Hamilton of his wife, on the Saturday morning after Herbert's mysterious excursion. The family had not yet left the breakfast-table.

"Perfectly well," was the reply; "poor young man! his appearance and painful weakness of voice called for commiseration too deeply not to be remembered."

"Is he not deformed?" inquired Miss Harcourt; "there was something particularly painful about his manner as he stood in the pulpit."

"He is slightly deformed now, but not five years ago he had a graceful, almost elegant figure, though always apparently too delicate for the fatiguing mental duties in which he indulged. He was of good family, but his parents were suddenly much reduced, and compelled to undergo many privations to enable him to go to Oxford. There he allowed himself neither relaxation nor pleasure of the most trifling and most harmless kind; his only wish seemed to be to repay his parents in some degree the heavy debt of gratitude which he felt he owed them. His persevering study, great talent, and remarkable conduct won him some valuable friends,

one of whom, as soon as he was ordained, presented him with a rich living in the North. For nine months he enjoyed the most unalloyed happiness. His pretty vicarage presented a happy comfortable home for his parents, and the comforts they now enjoyed, earned by the worth of their son, amply repaid them for former privations. One cold snowy night he was summoned to a poor parishioner, living about ten miles distant; the road was rugged, and in some parts dangerous; but he was not a man to shrink from his duty for such reasons. He was detained eight hours, during which time the snow had fallen incessantly, and it was pitchy dark. Still believing he knew his road, he proceeded, and the next morning was found lying apparently dead at the foot of a precipice, and almost crushed under the mangled and distorted carcase of his horse."

An exclamation of horror burst from all the little group, except from Percy and Herbert, the face of the former was covered with his hands, and his brother seemed so watching and feeling for him, as to be unable to join the general sympathy. All, however, were so engrossed with Mr. Hamilton's tale, that neither was observed.

"He was so severely injured, that for months his very life was despaired of. Symptoms of decline followed, and the inability to resume his ministerial duties for years, if ever again, compelled him to resign his rich and beautiful living in Yorkshire, and he felt himself once more a burden on his parents, with scarcely any hope of supporting them again. Nor was this all; his figure, once so slight and supple, had become so shrunk and maimed, that at first he seemed actually to loathe

the sight of his fellows. His voice, once so rich and almost thrilling, became wiry, and almost painfully monotonous; and for some months the conflict for submission to this inscrutable and most awful trial was so terrible, that he nearly sunk beneath it. This was of course still more physical than mental, and gradually subsided, as, after eighteen months' residence in Madeira, where he was sent by a benevolent friend, some portion of health returned. The same benefactor established his father in some humble but most welcome business in London, and earnestly, on his return, did his parents persuade him to remain quietly with them, and not undertake the ministry again; but this he could not do, and gratefully accepted a poor and most miserable parish on the moor, not eight miles from here."

"But when did you become acquainted with him, Papa?" asked Caroline; "you have never mentioned him before."

"No, my dear; I never saw him till the Sunday he officiated for Mr. Howard; but his appearance so deeply interested me, I did not rest till I had learned his whole history, which Mr. Howard had already discovered. He has been nearly a year in Devonshire, but so kept aloof from all but his own poor parishioners, dreading the ridicule and sneers of the more worldly and wealthy, that it was mere accident which made Mr. Howard acquainted with him. Our good minister's friendship and earnest exhortations have so far overcome his too great sensitiveness, as sometimes to prevail on him to visit the Vicarage, and I trust in time equally to succeed in bringing him here."

"But what is he so afraid of, dear Papa?" innocently

asked Emmeline. "Surely nobody could be so cruel as to ridicule him because he is deformed?"

"Unfortunately, my dear child, there are too many who only enter church for the sake of the sermon and the preacher, and to criticise severely and uncharitably all that differs from their preconceived ideas; to such persons Mr. Morton must be an object of derision. And now I come to the real reason of my asking your mother if she remembered him.

"Then you had a reason," answered Mrs. Hamilton, smiling; "your story has made me wonder whether you had or not."

"I must tax your memory once more, Emmeline, before my cause is told. Do you recollect, for a fortnight after the Sunday we heard him, he preached twice a week at Torrington, to oblige a very particular friend?"

"Yes, and that you feared the increased number of the congregation proceeded far more from curiosity than kindness or devotion."

"I did say so, and my fears are confirmed: some affairs brought Morton to Torrington for two or three days this week, and yesterday I called on him, and had some hours' interesting conversation. He was evidently even more than usually depressed and self-shrinking, if I may use the word, and at length touched, it seemed by my sympathy, he drew my attention to a poem in Harris's 'Weekly Magazine.'"

"'It is not enough that it has pleased my God to afflict me,' he said, 'but my fellow-creatures must kindly make me the subject of attacks as these. There is indeed no name, but to none else but me will it apply.' I could not reply, for I really felt too deeply

"Of wilful cruelty towards Mr. Morton, your story has certainly exculpated you," he said, as sternly as he could; "but otherwise you must be yourself aware that it has given me both grief and pain, and the more so, because you evidently shrink from telling me in what manner you squandered away that money which would have been sufficient to have fully discharged your debt six weeks ago; I must therefore believe there is still some deed of folly unrevealed. I condemn you to no punishment—you are old enough now to know right from wrong, and your own feelings must condemn or applaud you. Had you been firm, as I had hoped you were, example would not so have worked upon you, as to tempt even the composition of your satire; as it is, you must reap the consequences of your weakness, in the painful consciousness that you have deeply wounded one, whom it would seem had been already sufficiently afflicted, and that confidence must for the time be broken between us. Go, sir, the hour of your attendance on Mr. Howard is passed."

Mr. Hamilton rose with the last words, and somewhat hastily, quitted the room. Percy only ventured one look at his mother, she seemed so grieved—so sad—that he could not bear it; and darting out of the room, was seen in less than a minute traversing the grounds in the direction of the Vicarage, at such a rate that Edward, fleet as in general he was, could not overtake him. Herbert lingered; he could not bear that any part of Percy's story should remain concealed, and so told at once how his second allowance had been expended.

Mrs. Hamilton's eyes glistened. Percy's incoherence

on that one point had given her more anxiety than anything else, and the relief the truth bestowed was inexpressible. Imprudent it was; but there was something so loveable in such a disposition, that she could not resist going directly to her husband to impart it.

"You always bring me comfort, dearest!" was his fond rejoinder; "anxious as that boy's thoughtlessness must make me, (for what are his temptations now to what they will be?) still I must imbibe your fond belief, that with such an open, generous, truthful heart, he cannot go far wrong. But what *are* we to do about that unfortunate poem? I cannot associate with Morton, knowing the truth, and yet permit him to believe I am as ignorant of the author as himself."

"Let me speak to Percy before we decide on anything, my dear Arthur. Is Mr. Morton still at Torrington?"

"No: he was to return to Heathmore this morning."

Mrs. Hamilton looked very thoughtful, but she did not make any rejoinder.

In the hour of recreation Emmeline, declaring it was much too hot for the garden, sought her mother's private sitting-room, with the intention of asking where she could find her father. To her great delight, the question was arrested on her lips, for he was there. She seated herself on his knee, and remained there for some minutes without speaking—only looking up in his face, with the most coaxing expression imaginable.

"Well, Emmeline, what great favour are you going to ask me?" said Mr. Hamilton smiling; "some weighty boon, I am quite sure."

"Indeed, Papa, and how do you know that?"

"I can read it in your eyes."

"My eyes are treacherous tell-tales then, and you shall not see them any more," she replied, laughing, and shaking her head till her long bright ringlets completely hid her eyes and blushing cheeks. "But have they told you the favour I am going to ask?"

"No," replied her father, joining in her laugh; "they leave that to your tongue."

"I can read more, I think," said Mrs. Hamilton; "I am very much mistaken, if I do not know what Emmeline is going to ask."

"Only that—that—" still she hesitated, as if afraid to continue, and her mother added—

"That Papa will not be very angry with Percy; Emmeline, is not that the boon you have no courage to ask?"

A still deeper glow mounted to the child's fair cheek, and throwing her arms round her father's neck, she said, coaxingly and fondly,

"Mamma has guessed it, dear Papa! you must, indeed, you must forgive him—poor fellow! he is so *very* sorry, and he has suffered so much already—and he did not throw away his money foolishly, as you thought, he gave it to some very poor people—and you are always pleased when we are charitable; pray forget everything else but that, and treat him as you always do, dear Papa—will you not?"

"I wonder which is most certain, that Mamma must be a witch, or Emmeline a most eloquent little pleader?" said Mr. Hamilton, caressingly stroking the ringlets she had disordered; "and suppose after to-day I do grant your request—what then?"

"Oh, you will be such a dear, darling, good Papa!" exclaimed Emmeline, almost suffocating him with kisses, and then starting from his knee, she danced about the room in a perfect ecstasy of delight; "and Percy will be happy again, and we shall all be so happy. Mamma, dear Mamma, I am sure you will be glad too."

"And now, Emmeline, when you have danced yourself sober again, come back to your seat, for as I have listened to and answered you, you must listen to and answer me."

In an instant she was on his knee again, quite quiet and attentive.

"In the first place, do you think Percy was justified making Mr. Morton an object of satire at all, even if it should never have left his own portfolio?"

"No, Papa, and I am quite sure, if he had not been rather more excited—and—and heedless than usual—which was very likely he should be, you know, Papa, after such a day of nothing but pleasure—he would never have done such a thing: I am sure he did not think of hurting Mr. Morton's feelings; he only wanted to prove he was quite as clever as his companions, and that was very natural, you know, when he *is* so clever at such things. But my brother Percy willingly ridicule a clergyman! no, no, dear Papa, pray, do not believe it."

"Well defended, my little girl; but how do you justify his disobeying my commands, and incurring a debt?"

Emmeline was silent. "He was very wrong to do that, Papa; but I am sure, when he ordered the engravings, he did not intend to disobey you, and you know he is naturally very—I mean a little impatient."

"Still on the defensive, Emmeline, even against your

better judgment. Well, well, I must not make you condemn your brother ; does he know what an eloquent pleader he has in his sister ?”

“No, Papa ; and, pray, do not tell him.”

“And why not ?”

“Because he might think it was only for my sake you forgave him, and not for his own ; and I know I should not like that, if I were in his place.”

“He shall know nothing more than you desire, my dear little girl,” replied her father, drawing her closer to him, with almost involuntary tenderness. “And now will you try and remember what I am going to say. You wish me only to think of Percy’s kind act in giving his money to the poor people ; but I should have been better pleased in this case, had he been more *just*, and not so generous. I know it is not unfrequently said by young persons, when they think they are doing a charitable act, and can only do it by postponing the payment of their debts—oh, Mr. So and So has plenty of business, he can afford to wait for his money, but these poor creatures are starving. Now this is not generosity or charity, but actual injustice, and giving away money which is literally not their own. I do not believe Percy thought so, because I have no doubt he forgot Mr. Harris at the time entirely ; but still, as it was a mere impulse of kindness, it does not please me quite so much as it does you.”

“But it was charity, Papa, was it not ? You have said, that whenever we are kind and good to the poor, God is pleased with us ; and if Percy did not intend to wrong Mr. Harris, and only thought about relieving the poor family, was it not a good feeling ?”

“It was ; but it might have been still worthier.

Suppose Percy had encountered this case of distress, when on his way to order his engravings, and to enable him to relieve it as he wished, he had given up the purchasing them? That he found he could not afford the *two*, and so gave up the one mere *individual* gratification, to succour some unhappy fellow-creatures. Would not that have been still worthier? and by the conquest of his own inclinations render his charity still more acceptable to God. Do you quite understand me, Emmy?"

"I think I do, dear Papa; you mean that, though God is so good, He is pleased whenever we are charitable, He is still better pleased when to be so gives us a little pain."

"Very well explained, my little girl; so you see in this instance, if Percy had been just before he was generous, and then to be generous, had denied himself some pleasure, his conduct would not have given us or himself any pain, but have been quite as worthy of all the praise you could bestow. And now I wonder how Mamma could have discovered so exactly what favour you had to ask?"

"Oh, Mamma always knows all my feelings and wishes, almost before I know them myself, though I never can find out how."

"Shall I tell you, Emmeline? Your mother has devoted hours, weeks, months, and years to studying the characters of all her children; so to know them, that she may not only be able to guide you in the path of good, but to share all your little joys and sorrows, to heighten the one and guard you from the other. Ought you not to be very grateful to your Father in Heaven for giving you such a mother?"

His child made no answer in words, but she slipped from his knee, and darting to her mother, clasped her little arms tight round her neck, and hid her glowing cheeks and tearful eyes in her bosom. And from that hour, as she felt her mother's fond return of that passionate embrace, her love became religion, though she knew it not. Her thoughts flew to her cousins and many others, who had no mother, and to others whose mothers left them to nurses and governesses, and seemed always to keep them at a distance. And she felt, how could she thank and love God enough? nor was it the mere feeling of the moment, it became part of her being, for the right moment had been seized to impress it.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNPLEASANT PROPOSAL. — THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

—A FATHER'S GRIEF FROM A MOTHER'S WEAKNESS.

—A FATHER'S JOY FROM A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

MEANWHILE the young heir of Oakwood had passed no very pleasant day. His thoughts since Mr. Howard's return had been so preoccupied, that his studies had been unusually neglected; so much so, as rather to excite the displeasure of his gentle and forbearing preceptor. The emotion of the morning had not tended to steady his ideas, and a severe reproof and long imposition was the consequence. Not one word did he deign to address Herbert and Edward, who, perceiving him leave the Vicarage with every mark of irritation, endeavoured, during their walk home, to soothe him. His step was even more rapid than that in which he had left home, and he neither stopped nor spoke till he had reached his father's library, which, fortunately for the indulgence of his ire in words, was untenanted. He dashed his cap from his brow, flung his books with violence on the ground, and burst forth—

“Am I not a fool—an idiot, thus to torment myself, and for one act of folly, when hundreds of boys at my age, are entirely their own masters? do what they please—spend what they please—neither questioned nor reproved—and that poem—how many would glory

in its authorship, and not care a whit whom it might wound. Why am I such a fool, as to reproach myself about it, and then be punished like a schoolboy with an imposition to occupy me at home, because I did not choose to learn in the hours of study?—Not choose! I wish Mr. Howard could feel as I have done to-day, nay, all this week; and I challenge him to bore his head with Greek and Latin! But why am I so cowed as to feel so? Why cannot I have the same spirit as others—instead of being such a slave—such a—”

“Percy!” exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, who, having sought him the moment she heard the hall-door close, had heard nearly the whole of his violent speech, and was almost alarmed at the unusual passion it evinced. Her voice of astonished expostulation checked his words, but not his agitation; he threw himself on a chair, and leaning his arms upon the table, buried his face upon them, while his whole frame shook. His mother sat down by him, and laying her hand on his arm, said gently—

“What is it that has so irritated you, my dear Percy? What has made you return home in such a very different mood to that in which you left it? Tell me, my boy.”

Percy tried to keep silence, for he knew if he spoke he should, as he expressed it, be a child again, and his pride tried hard for victory. Even his father or Herbert at that moment would have chafed him into increased anger, but the almost passionate love and reverence which he felt for his mother triumphed over his wrath, and told him he was much more unhappy than angry; and that he longed for her to comfort him, as she always had done in his childish griefs; and so he put his arms

round her, and laid his head on her shoulder, and said, in a half-choked voice :—

“I am very unhappy, mother; I feel as if I had been everything that was bad, and cruel, and foolish, and so it was a relief to be in a passion; but I did not mean you to hear it, and cause you more grief than I have done already.”

“You have been very thoughtless, very foolish, and not quite so firm as we could have wished, my own dear boy, but I will not have you accuse yourself of any graver faults,” replied Mrs. Hamilton, as she lightly pushed back the clustering hair from his heated forehead, and the gentle touch of her cool hand seemed as restorative as her soothing words; and Percy as he listened to her, as she continued speaking to him in the same strain for some little time, felt more relieved than five minutes before he thought possible, and more than ever determined that he would never act so thoughtlessly; or, if he were tempted to do so, never keep it concealed so long again. Mrs. Hamilton’s anxious desire with him, was always to do justice to his better qualities, at the same time that she blamed and convinced him of his faults. It was a very delicate thing, and very difficult to succeed in, perhaps impossible, to minds less peculiarly refined and hearts less intensely anxious than Mrs. Hamilton’s; but no difficulty, no failure, had ever deterred her—and in Percy she was already rewarded. He was of that high fine spirit, that any unjust harshness would have actually confirmed in error—any unguarded word bring argument on argument, and so, for the mere sake of opposition, cause him to abide in his opinions, when the acknowledgment

of his being right in some things, produced the voluntary confession of his error in others.

"And now about these unfortunate verses, my dear boy; I am not quite clear as to their fate, how it happened that you did not destroy them directly you returned home."

"I fully intended, and believed I had done so, Mother, but the whirl of that night seemed to extend to the morning, and I dressed and prepared for Mr. Howard in such a hurry (I had overslept myself too), that though I had quite resolved they should not pollute my pocket-book any longer, I had no time to look over my papers—thought I could not be mistaken in their outside—burnt those I really wished to keep, and threw those which have caused me all this pain into my portfolio. If I had but been firm enough to have followed my father's advice, and left my companions before supper!—or, if I did join them, had not been so weak, so mad, as to yield to the temptation, but adhered to my principles, notwithstanding they might have been laughed at, I might have been spared it all; but I was so excited, so heated, with a more than sufficient quantity of wine, that I did not know what I was about—not its extent of wrong, at least."

"And you have suffered enough for an evening's excitement, my poor boy; but I am sure you would atone for it, if you could."

"Atone for it, Mother! I would give all I possess to cancel that odious poem, and blot it from Mr. Morton's memory, as from my own."

"And I think you can do both, Percy."

He looked at her in utter bewilderment.

"Do both, Mother!" he repeated.

"Yes, my boy! it is a painful remedy, but it would be an effectual one. Seek Mr. Morton, and tell him yourself your whole story."

Percy crimsoned to the very temples.

"Do not ask me such a thing, Mother," he answered, very hurriedly; "I cannot do it."

"You think so at this moment, my dear boy; I am not at all astonished that you should, for it will be very humiliating and very painful; and if I could spare you either the humiliation or the pain, yet produce the same good effects, I need not tell you how gladly I would; but no one can remove the sting of that poem from Mr. Morton's sensitive feelings but yourself, and I am quite sure, if you will allow yourself a little time for quiet thought, you will agree with me."

"But why should I inflict such pain upon myself, granting I deserve it?" answered Percy, still much heated; "when, though my poem is the only one that has unfortunately met his eye, the others were quite as galling, and my companions quite as much to blame—why should I be the sufferer?"

"Because by many errors you have brought it on yourself. Your companions did indeed act very wrongly, but are we quite sure that the principles which your father and Mr. Howard have so carefully impressed upon you, have been as carefully impressed upon them? and in such a case are not you the more responsible? They had evidently no inward check to keep them from such an amusement; you had, for you have acknowledged that you kept aloof at first, *knowing it was wrong*, and

only yielded from want of sufficient firmness. Inflict the pain of an avowal upon yourself, my boy, and its memory will help you in future from yielding to too great weakness—and the act prove to us that, though for a moment led into great error, you are still as brave and honest as we believe you."

Percy did not reply, but his countenance denoted an inward struggle, and his mother added—

"Suppose, as is very likely, Mr. Morton becomes intimate here; how can you, with your open truthful heart, associate with him, with any comfort or confidence, even though perfectly satisfied that we would not betray you, and that he would never know the truth? You may fancy now that you could, but I know my Percy better; but I must not talk to you any more, for the dressing-bell rang some minutes ago. Remember, my dear boy, that I lay no command on you to seek Mr. Morton; I have only told you that which I believe would restore you to happiness and atone for your faults, more effectually than anything else; but you are quite at liberty to act as you think proper."

She left the room as she spoke, but Percy remained for some few minutes longer in deep thought, and when he prepared for dinner and joined his family, it was still in the same unbroken silence. Mr. Hamilton took no notice of him, and two or three times the little affectionate Emmeline felt the tears rising to her eyes, for she could not bear to see that brother, who was in general the life of the family group, so silent and abstracted.

Sliding after him, as he quitted the room after

dinner, she took his hand, and looked coaxingly in his face, longing, but not daring, to tell him her father's promise, for fear he should discover her share in the transaction.

"Well, dear Emmy?"

"Are you going to take a walk, Percy?—let me go with you."

"I do not think I am, love.—I may be going to ride."

"To ride!" repeated the little girl; "will it be worth while?"

"You forget, Emmy, it is summer now, I have full four hours before prayers; but do not say anything about my intentions, Emmeline, for I do not know them myself yet."

He kissed her forehead and left her, and a few minutes afterwards she was summoned to join her mother, Caroline, and Ellen in a walk. They sauntered through the grounds in the direction of the northern lodge, which opened on the road leading to Dartmoor; when, not a quarter of an hour after they had left the house, they were overtaken by Percy, riding at what seemed almost a hand gallop, but he had time as he passed his mother to gracefully doff his cap, and her fond heart throbbed, as she caught the expression of his flushed but earnest face. He was out of sight in another moment, followed by Robert, who was the lads' constant attendant.

Before they had concluded their walk, they met Mrs. Greville and Mary, and returned with them to the house. Emmeline, who had not seen Mary for nearly a fortnight, was in an ecstasy of enjoyment, and Ellen always

felt it a real pleasure quietly to walk by Mary's side, and answer the many questions with which she always contrived to interest her. On entering the house, Mr. Hamilton, Herbert, and Edward joined them, and Mrs. Hamilton was somewhat surprised at the even more than ordinary warmth with which her son was greeted by her friends, and at the flush which stained his cheek at Mrs. Greville's first words—

"You were not too much fatigued last Thursday, I hope, my dear Herbert?" she inquired, and as she looked at him her eyes glistened in tears."

"Oh, not in the least," he replied instantly, and as if he would exceedingly like to change the subject; but Mrs. Greville, turning to Mrs. Hamilton, continued—

"Will you forgive me, Emmeline, if I confess that my visit this evening was more to inquire after your son, than even to see you. I was so anxious to know that he had suffered no inconvenience from his unusual and I am sure fatiguing exertion."

"I suppose I must not be jealous, as you are so candid," replied Mrs. Hamilton, smiling; "but I feel very much inclined to be so, finding that you are more in my son's confidence than I am myself. I know Herbert was from home on Thursday, but I was not aware of any particular exertion on his part."

"Did you not know then where he went?" exclaimed Mary and her mother at the same moment; and the former continued, with unusual eagerness, "Did you not know that he went to the Races, to try and hear something of Alfred? And that by hunting about both the fair and the race-ground—scenes which I know he so much dislikes—he actually found him, and amused

him so successfully, that he kept him with him all day. Papa was so engaged that he had no time to look after Alfred, who, from being left entirely to himself, might have sought the worst companions ; I cannot think what charm Herbert used, but Alfred was quite contented to be with him ; they dined together, and—

“He brought me what, next to my boy himself, was the greatest consolation I could have,” interposed Mrs. Greville, her voice so faltering, that tears almost escaped, —“a few lines which, he assures me, Alfred thought of writing himself, telling me, he could not bear to think he had left home without kissing me, and that, though he was so happy with his father, that he could not wish to return home, he still loved me and Mary very, very much, and would continue to love us, and come and see us, whenever he could. Oh, Emmeline, can you not imagine the relief of such a letter, of hearing of him at all ? and it was all through the kindness, the goodness of your boy !”

When Mrs. Greville and Mary had first begun to speak, Herbert tried to retreat ; but Edward placing himself against the door, so that to open it was impossible, and Caroline and Emmeline, both at once catching hold of him, to keep him prisoner, egress was not to be thought of ; so, in laughing despair, he broke from his sisters, flung himself on his usual seat, his mother’s stool, and almost hid himself in her dress.

“It must have been a relief, indeed,” answered Mr. Hamilton ; “and rejoiced am I that my quiet Herbert thought of such a plan. Look up, Master Shamefaced, and tell us the reason of your most extraordinary mystery on this occasion. Why did you so carefully

conceal your intentions from your mother and myself?"

"Because, Papa, I feared you might not approve of them; I hardly dared think about it myself, for it seemed as if I were doing actually wrong in disregarding your principles, for only the *chance* of effecting good. I know, if I had mentioned my wish to find Alfred, or hear something about him, you would have not refused my going; but then Mamma must have known it, and she would have been anxious and uncomfortable, if I had not appeared the very moment I had named; would you not?" he continued, looking up in her face with that expression of affection, which very few even comparative strangers had power to resist.

"I should indeed, my dear boy; I fear I should have condemned your scheme as a very wild one, and really am glad you thought so much of my comfort, as not to tell me more than you did. So I must not even be jealous, Jessie, but rather propose a vote of thanks to you and Mary for solving the mystery. I do not think Herbert ever excited so much curiosity and speculation in his life before."

The entrance of Mr. Grahame changed the current of the conversation, greatly to Herbert's relief, for he did not at all like being thus brought forward. Austere as Grahame was at home, he was always welcomed with pleasure by the young Hamiltons, who never could understand why Annie and Cecil should so fear him. That something unusual had annoyed him, Mr. Hamilton perceived at the first glance; but he took no notice, for Grahame seemed to find relief in talking gaily to the young people.

"And where is my friend Percy?" he inquired, as he joined the happy group at tea, and Percy was still absent. Mr. Hamilton repeated the question in some surprise; but his wife replying that he had gone to ride, and might not be back yet, the subject dropped.

After tea Mrs. Greville and Mary, attended by Herbert and Edward, returned to the Manor; and the little girls went to finish some business for the next day, and amuse themselves as they liked. Grahame remained alone with his friends, who at length drew from him the cause of his solicitude. He had that morning discovered, that, notwithstanding his positive commands, Cecil had gone to the prohibited places of amusement. His wife had prevaricated when he questioned her; at one moment almost denying her connivance at the boy's disobedience, at another unconsciously acknowledging it, by insisting that there was no harm in it, and if Grahame would persist in so interfering with his children's amusements, he must expect to be disobeyed. If such were his home, where was he to look for truth, honour, and affection? What would be his son's after career, if such were the lessons of his childhood? He had punished him severely, but there was little hope of its producing any good effect, when his wife was yet more to blame than his child. It would only alienate the boy's affections still more from him. Yet what could he do? Could he let such disobedience and untruthfulness—for Cecil had denied his having been at the races—pass unnoticed? He had shut himself up in his library the remainder of the day; but at length, unable to bear his own thoughts, had walked over to Oakwood, feeling sure, if peace were to be found, he should find it there.

Their sympathy it was easy for Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton to give—for they felt it sincerely—but to advise was both delicate and difficult. To interfere in a household is not the part even of the most intimate friends. And when Lady Helen herself encouraged the boy in his disobedience, and showed him an example of equivocation, what could be said?—Grahame could not bear the idea of a public school for a boy scarcely eleven, and whose home-influence was so injurious, and Mr. Hamilton could not advise it. He tried therefore merely to raise the depressed spirits of his friend, bringing forward many instances, when even the best training failed; and others, where the faults of childhood were subdued by circumstances, and became fair promising youth. Grahame shook his head despondingly.

“You can scarcely be a fit judge of my trial, Hamilton,” he said; “you have known nothing but the blessing of hand-in-hand companionship, in the training of your children as in everything else. There must be *unity* between father and mother, or there is little hope of joy in their offspring for either; were my wife only in some things like yours—but I see I must not speak so,” he added, hurriedly, as he met a glance of reproach from Mrs. Hamilton, and he turned to address the two lads, who at that instant entered from their walk. The bell for prayers rung soon afterwards, and Grahame rose to say good night.

“Nay, stay with us,” said Mr. Hamilton, earnestly. “Why should the call for devotion be the signal for separation? join us, Grahame. It is not the first time by very many that we have prayed together.”

Grahame yielded without an instant’s hesitation. Still

Percy had not returned, and his mother became dreadfully anxious. Her husband at her request waited a quarter of an hour, but reluctantly; for he was more particular that every member of his household should assemble at the stated hour of prayer, than in any other point relating to his establishment. Scarcely, however, had the first word been said, when Percy and Robert entered, and the former, with a very rapid, but noiseless step, traversed the large room, and knelt in his accustomed place. In vain did Mrs. Hamilton try to keep her thoughts fixed on the service. Had he really been to Mr. Morton, and if he had, how had he been received? had his fine spirit been soothed or irritated? and a thousand other nameless but natural fears thronged her heart. But one look on her son as he rose reassured her; his cheek was flushed with rapid riding, but his dark eye sparkled, and he looked more bright and joyous than he had done for weeks. He advanced without hesitation to Mr. Hamilton the moment the domestics had quitted the library, and said, eagerly, but still respectfully—

“Will you, too, forgive me, my dear father? Mr. Morton knows the whole truth, and has not only pardoned my cruel folly, but assured me, that I have more than atoned for the pain my hateful verses inflicted; that he will laugh at them himself, and declare he knows their author as a most particular friend—which he hopes you will permit me to become—whenever he has the opportunity; for that such notice of them will be the surest way to consign them to oblivion. I have endured so much pain the last few weeks that I do not think I

shall be so thoughtless and weak in a hurry again. Will you try me once more?"

Astonished and touched, far more than he was ever in the habit of allowing himself to feel, much less to display, Mr. Hamilton had some difficulty in replying; but his words were even more than satisfactory to his son's eager heart, for he answered earnestly—

"Pray do not give me any praise for my courage, Papa; I am quite sure, if it had not been for Mamma's suggestion, I never could have done it. It might have crossed my mind, but I fear pride would not have permitted me to listen to it; but when Mamma put the case before me as she did, I could not prevent my conscience from feeling the truth of all she said, and if I had not followed her advice, I should have been more miserable still. Dearest mother," he continued, as he turned with even more than his usual affection to receive her nightly embrace, "you have made me so happy! how can I thank you?"

If she had made him happy, he certainly had returned the blessing, for Mrs. Hamilton had seldom felt more exquisite pleasure than she did at that moment; and her little Emmeline, though she could not quite understand all her mother's feelings, felt in her way almost as glad.

"Well, Mrs. Hamilton, will not your son's words confirm mine?" said Mr. Grahame, trying to speak cheerfully, when the young party had retired, and he was again alone with his friends. "Can he go far wrong with such a friend?"

"Indeed, he has done me more than justice, and him-

self not enough. When I left him, I had scarcely a hope that my very disagreeable advice would be followed; besides, Mr. Grahame," she added, more playfully, "it was not from disagreeing with you on a mother's influence that my look reproached you, you know well enough what it meant; and I still say that even now, if you would but be less reserved and stern, would but see Helen's many better qualities, as clearly as you do her faults, you might still win her to your will even with regard to your children."

"Not now, Mrs. Hamilton, it is too late; but you have no idea how your look transported me back to years past," he added, evidently resolved to change the subject, "when I actually almost feared to approach you. Do you remember, Hamilton, when I told you, if Miss Manvers had a fault, she was too cold."

"I shall not easily forget the incidents of that night," replied Mr. Hamilton, with a fond glance towards his wife. "Poor Eleanor, when her conduct that evening fell under my lash, I little thought her orphan children would be living under my roof, and to me almost like my own."

"And one her very image," observed Grahame. "Does either resemble her in mind or disposition?"

"Edward almost as much in mind as in personal beauty," replied Mrs. Hamilton; "but not in all points of his disposition. Ellen does not resemble her poor mother in anything."

"Is she like her father?"

"I did not know him sufficiently to judge, but I fancy not. In fact, I hardly yet understand Ellen."

"Indeed!" answered Grahame, smiling; "is your penetrative genius here at fault?"

"I fear it is," she answered in the same tone; "Ellen is my youngest child—and that which has been my successful help five times, has become blunted at the sixth, and refuses to aid me farther."

"Grahame, do not heed her," interposed her husband, laughing; "she fancies there is something extraordinary about Ellen, which she cannot comprehend; and I feel certain that imagination has been playing with my wife's sober judgment, and that our little niece is a very ordinary child, only rather more sad and quiet than is usual to her age; which may be easily accounted for by her early trials and constant ill-health. So I solve what my wife pronounces a mystery. She has so few fancies, however, that I do not quarrel with this, for it has all the charm of novelty."

There were more than usual subjects of thought on the minds of all the young inmates of Oakwood, before they went to sleep that night. Percy's, Herbert's, and Emmeline's were all peculiarly happy and peaceful. Caroline's were not so agreeable. Praise lavished on others never gave her pleasure: the question would always come, why did she not receive it too? It was very hard that she so seldom received it, and self-love was always ready to accuse her parents of some degree of partiality, rather than herself of unworthiness. But these thoughts only came when she was alone; the moment she heard her father's voice, or met her mother's smile, they fled from her till they were pertinaciously recalled.

Ellen thought mostly of Herbert. She had been as

curious as the rest to know where he had been, though she had not said so much about it. But that it was for some good, kind deed she had never doubted.

"No wonder Mary loves him so much," she said internally; "but how can I ever hope he will love one so often naughty as I am. If Edward be so much superior—what must Herbert be? How I wish I were his sister, and then he would love me, deserving or not."

That poor Ellen was often thought, as she expressed it, "naughty" was true; and it was this mingling of many apparent faults, especially disregard to her aunt's commands, and but too often endeavour to conceal and equivocate, instead of an open confession, with a sorrow and repentance too deep and painful for her years, that so fairly bewildered Mrs. Hamilton, and really, as she had told Mr. Grahame, prevented her from understanding Ellen. If she could but have known of that unfortunate promise, and the strong hold it had taken of the child's vivid imagination;—that by dwelling on it, she had actually made herself believe, that by always shielding Edward from blame or punishment, she was obeying and making her mother love her from Heaven, and so, still more deepening her father's affection for her; and that this idea enabled her to bear the suffering of that most painful of all punishments, her aunt's displeasure, Mrs. Hamilton would have left no means untried to remove such a mistaken impression, and no doubt would have succeeded; but she had not the slightest conception of the real origin of her niece's incomprehensible contradictions. She had believed and hoped the influences of her earlier life would disappear

before the quiet, wholesome routine of the present, and often, and often she found herself fearing that it could not be only maternal neglect, but actual disposition at fault. When convinced of the great importance of truth, Ellen frequently, instead of attempting to conceal what Edward might have heedlessly done, actually took it upon herself, not being able to define that in such self-sacrifice she was also forfeiting truth; or if she did believe so, it was also clear, that to tell the real truth to her aunt and betray Edward, was breaking her solemn promise to her mother, and either way she was doing wrong. To describe or define the chaos in the poor child's mind, from these contending feelings, would be almost as impossible to us as it was to herself. She only knew that she was often naughty when she most wished to be good; that her aunt must think she did not care for her displeasure; when it made her so very unhappy, that she was scarcely ever in disgrace without being ill. That she never could feel happy, for even when "good" there always seemed a weight hanging over her, and therefore she must be different to, and worse than anybody else. Little do mere superficial observers know the capabilities for joy or suffering in a young child's heart, the exquisitely tender germ which is committed to us; the awful responsibility which lies in the hands of adults, for the joy or grief, good or evil, as the portion of a child! Happily for Ellen, Mrs. Hamilton's love was as inexhaustible as her patience, or her niece might have been still more unhappy, for few would have so understood and practised the delicate and difficult task of constantly being called upon to correct, and yet to love.

Our young readers must not think Edward very cowardly and very dishonorable always to let his sister bear the penalty of his faults. He had never been taught, and therefore could not understand the imperative necessity, when guilty of heedlessness or disobedience, boldly to step forward, whether others were injured or not, and avow it. He did not understand how not to say anything about it, unless he was asked, could be a want of truth.

It was also Mrs. Hamilton's constant custom never to mention to the members of her family, who might have been absent at the time, anything of fault or disgrace which had fallen under her own immediate jurisdiction, unless their nature absolutely demanded it; and the absence of the young offenders from the happy family circle, either at meals or hours of recreation, when such an unusual proceeding was necessary, in consequence never excited any remark; but a very general feeling of regret. Edward, therefore, scarcely ever heard the actual cause of his sister's disgrace; and sometimes did not even know she had incurred it. He did indeed, when she was sometimes absent, feel very uncomfortable; but his immoveable awe of his really indulgent uncle (an impression of his mother's creating quite as strong as Ellen's idea of the sanctity of her promise) caused him to adopt every means of removing the uncomfortable consciousness that he was far more to blame than Ellen, but the right one, a fearless inquiry as to why she was punished, and an open avowal that it was he who had either led her into error, or was the real offender. His thoughts on Percy's conduct were very different to those of his cousins.

"No!" he exclaimed, almost aloud, in the energy of his feelings, "no! I would have suffered anything, everything, rather than have done this—seek Mr. Morton, humble myself by avowing the truth to him, and ask his pardon for a mere clever joke, that Percy ought to have been proud of, instead of regretting! If I did not know him well, I should believe him a craven milk-and-water lad, without a particle of the right spirit within him. What could have possessed him?—my uncle's look must have frightened him out of his sober senses: to be sure it was very terrible; poor mamma was indeed right as to his unbending sternness; but I think I could have dared even his anger, rather than beg Mr. Morton's pardon, when there really was no necessity." And sleep overtook him, with the firm conviction resting on his mind, that though in some things Percy might be his equal, yet in manliness and spirit he (Edward) was decidedly the superior.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTATION AND DISOBEDIENCE.—FEAR.—FALSEHOOD
AND PUNISHMENT.

IT was the Christmas vacation—always a happy season in the halls of Oakwood. The previous year, the general juvenile party with which Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton indulged their children on the first or sixth of January, as circumstances permitted, had not taken place, on account of Mrs. Fortescue's death, and was therefore this year anticipated with even more than usual joy. Caroline and Emmeline were never permitted to go to indiscriminate parties. Two or three, really confined to children, their mother allowed their joining with Miss Harcourt, in the course of the year, but their own ball was always considered the acme of enjoyment, especially now that Caroline began to fancy herself very much too old for only children's parties. Annie went almost everywhere with Lady Helen, and quite laughed at the idea of joining children, and Caroline this year began to wish most intensely that her mother would take her out to grown-up parties too, and lost all relish for the pleasant parties she had enjoyed. Mrs. Hamilton never obliged her to go out with Emmeline and Ellen, if she really did not wish it; but Caroline could not get any farther in considering herself a woman.

The week before Christmas, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton did not allow to be all holiday and amusement. The season was to their feelings of religion one of earnest intense thankfulness, and they wished to make it equally so to their children—a source of joy and hope, indeed, but the joy and hope of Heaven, not the mere amusements and pleasures of earth. They had thought long and tried earnestly to make their children so to love serious things, as never to associate them with gloom or sadness—never to fancy that to be truly and spiritually religious demanded a relinquishment of the joys and pleasures and innocent happiness of their age, and admirably had they succeeded. Christmas week was always anticipated with quiet gladness, for they were still more with their father and mother; and the few serious readings and lessons they had, were from and with them alone; Miss Harcourt's time was then entirely her own. As soon as Christmas-day was passed, the young party, with the sole exception of two hours' work by themselves, in the morning or some part of the day, if the mornings were wanted—for Mrs. Hamilton never permitted *all* duty to be suspended, believing—and her children had experienced the wisdom of the belief—that pleasure and recreation were infinitely more enjoyable after the performance of some duty, however brief and easy, than had they nothing to do but to amuse themselves all day—were allowed to be just as free, happy, and noisy as they pleased; and the exuberance of their innocent happiness would have been envied by many, who might have thought the quiet routine of their usual life irksome indeed.

Edward Fortescue was looking forward with the

greatest delight to becoming a midshipman in the course of the following year. He hoped, indeed, it would be in a very few months; but his uncle and Mr. Howard had only told him to work on as hard as he could, for the summons might come for him to join at a very short notice, and it would be very dreadful, if the commission should be refused because his guardians did not think him forward enough in his various studies to leave them. They had looked very mischievous when they had told him this, and Edward had enjoyed the joke, and resolved they should not have any such amusement. He would go to sea, if he worked night and day for the privilege; and he really did so well, that his uncle gave him great praise, which was as unexpected and delightful as his anger was terrible.

It happened that the morning after Christmas-day, Edward and Ellen were quite alone in the school-room; the former was in one of his most impatient moods, for at his own request, his uncle was to examine him in a favorite study, and one of the necessary books was wanting. He had read it a few evenings previous, but something had crossed him, and in a desperate passion he had flung the book from him, and where it fell he neither knew nor cared. Caroline and Emmeline had already gone on an expedition to some poor people, with their mother; Ellen had asked and received permission to put some seeds in her little garden, Percy having kindly promised to show her where, and to do some harder work in it for her. He was, however, still engaged with his father, and would be, he had told her, for perhaps an hour longer, but he would be sure to come to her then; and, to employ the interval, she

had intended to work hard at a purse she was making for him. Edward, however, entirely engrossed her, and for nearly half an hour they hunted in every creak and corner of the room, at length—

"I see it! I see it! Edward," Ellen exclaimed, adding, however, in a very desponding tone, "but what shall we do? we cannot get it."

"Why not?" answered Edward, impatiently; "where is it, Ellen?"

"Behind that stand of flowers," she replied, pointing to one that filled a corner of the room and which, though it was winter, was filled with some beautiful flowering geraniums of all colours, and some few rare myrtles in full flower.

"There!" said Edward, joyfully; "Oh, that is very easily moved—I shall get it in a minute."

"But you know Aunt Emmeline desired us not to touch it," implored Ellen, clinging to his arm; "and the flowers are almost all Caroline's, dear Edward—pray do not move it."

"Stuff and nonsense, Ellen! How is Aunt to know anything about it? and what do I care about the flowers being Caroline's; they may be whose they like, but they shall not prevent my getting my book."

"But it will be disobeying Aunt, Edward—pray, pray don't; you know how displeased she was with Emmeline last week for a much more trifling disobedience than this will be. And if anything should happen to the flowers, Caroline will be so angry."

"And what do I care for Caroline's anger," retorted Edward, impatiently; "my uncle's indeed is something to care about, and if I don't get my book and go to

him directly, I shall have it. I don't like to disobey Aunt, but in this case there is no help for it. I am sure I can reach it without doing any harm; besides, I *must* get my book—I cannot do without it.”

“Then only wait till Aunt comes home, or at least let me ask Uncle if we may move it, dear Edward; do let me go—I will not be a minute.”

“And so betray my being in a passion the other day, and get me a reproof for that, and for my carelessness into the bargain! Nonsense, Ellen; I will get it, and you must help me, for I have not a moment to lose.”

“No, Edward! indeed, indeed I cannot touch it;” she replied, imploringly, and shrinking back.

“Say, rather, you wish to get me into disgrace, and perhaps prevented from going out this evening, and to-morrow, and Friday too!” exclaimed Edward, irritated beyond all forbearance; “and the other day you were so very sorry I was going from home so soon—much you must care about me, that you cannot do such a trifling thing as this to oblige me! I hate deceit.”

Ellen made no reply, though the tears started to her eyes; but as usual her firmness deserted her. The heavy stand was carefully moved a little forwards, without injuring any of the plants; the book was obtained, and at that moment the voice of Percy was heard exclaiming—

“Edward! Edward! what are you about? Papa has been expecting you the last half hour; he says if you do not come directly, you will not have time to do all you wish—what can you be about?”

Edward did not wait to hear much more than his name, but darted off, leaving his sister to push back the stand.

Ellen felt almost sure she could not do it by herself; but how was she to act? To ask assistance would not only be confessing her own disobedience, but inculcating her brother, and really perhaps deprive him of the enjoyments he anticipated, and so confirm his unkind words. She tried to replace it, and thought she had quite succeeded; but as she moved it, one of the myrtles fell to the ground, and its beautiful blossom hung on the stalk, preserved from being quite broken off only by three or four delicate fibres. It was Caroline's favorite plant; one she so cherished and tended, that Percy called it her petted child; and poor Ellen stood paralysed; she raised the pot mechanically, and rested the broken head of the flower against the still uninjured sprig, and it looked so well and natural, that the thought for a moment darted across her mind that after all it might not be discovered. Then came all her aunt's lessons of the many ways of acting an untruth without words, and, therefore, even if it should not be discovered, was no comfort;—but could she, dared she voluntarily confess what must appear a wilful disobedience? If her aunt had been at home, she might in that first moment have gained the necessary courage; but she was not expected back for two or three hours, and Ellen sat with her face buried in her hands, only conscious of misery, till her cousin's joyous voice called out from the hall—

“Come along, Lelly, I have kept you long enough; Tiny would never have left me quiet so long; but there is no tiring your patience. However, I will make up for it now.”

And glad to escape from her own thoughts, she hastily collected the various seeds, and ran after him. And

Percy was so active, so obliging, so amusing in his queer ways of working and talking, that she almost forgot the impending trial, till she met her aunt and cousins at luncheon. Edward had been so intent, so happy at his business with his uncle ; that he never cast a thought as to how the stand got back, and after lunch he had to go for a row on the river, and after dinner to attend a lecture on astronomy, which that night and the one following was to be given at the town-hall in T—. His uncle and Percy and Herbert were to accompany him, and so that he should give a thought to anything disagreeable was not likely.

The day wore on ; Ellen's little courage had all gone, and she almost unconsciously hoped that nothing would be discovered. Mr. Hamilton and the lads departed at six, and Mrs. Hamilton proposed adjourning to her daughters' room, to finish an entertaining book that they were reading aloud. She had noticed, with her usual penetration, that all day Ellen evidently shrunk from her eye, and felt quite sure something was wrong again ; but she asked no questions, fearing again to tempt equivocation. Caroline's passionate exclamation that somebody had broken her beautiful flower, drew the attention of all to the stand, and one glance sufficed to tell Mrs. Hamilton that it had been moved. Her anxious suspicions at once connected this with Ellen's shrinking manner, and she turned to ask her if she knew anything about it. But Ellen had disappeared ; and she rang the bell, and inquired of the only domestics whose department ever led them into the room, if they could explain the accident. But neither of them could, all

uniting in declaring, that in the morning the myrtle was quite perfect.

"Ellen was at home, Mamma; she must know something about it. Percy said they did not begin gardening till more than an hour after we were gone," exclaimed Caroline, whose temper was sorely tried by this downfall of all her cares. "I dare say she did it herself—spiteful thing!—and has gone to hide herself rather than confess it—it is just like her!"

"Stop, Caroline, do not condemn till you are quite certain; and do not in your anger say what is not true. Ellen has given no evidence as yet of being spiteful or mischievous. Emmeline, go, and tell your cousin that I want her."

The child obeyed. Miss Harcourt had continued working most industriously at the table, without uttering a word, though Mrs. Hamilton's countenance expressed such unusual perplexity and pain, that it would have seemed kinder to have spoken. One look at Ellen convinced her aunt, and she actually paused before she spoke, dreading the reply almost as much as the child did the question. It was scarcely audible; it might have been denial, it certainly was not affirmative, for Miss Harcourt instantly exclaimed—

"Ellen, how can you tell such a deliberate falsehood? I would not tell your Aunt, for I really wished you to have the opportunity of in some degree redeeming your disobedience; but I saw you move back the stand, and your sinful attempt at concealment by replacing the broken flower—and now you dare deny it?"

"I did not replace the flower with the intention of

concealing it," exclaimed Ellen, bursting into tears; for that one unjust charge seemed to give back the power of speech, though the violent reproach and invective which burst from Caroline prevented anything farther.

"I must beg you to be silent, Caroline, or to leave the room, till I have done speaking to your cousin," said her mother, quietly; "the fate of your flower seems to make you forget that I have never yet permitted disrespect or any display of temper in my presence."

"But what right had Ellen to touch the stand?"

"None—she has both disobeyed and again tried to deceive me; faults which it is my duty to chastise, but not yours to upbraid. Answer me, Ellen, at once and briefly; your fault is known, and, therefore, all farther equivocation is useless. Did you move that flower-stand?"

"Yes," replied the child, almost choked with sobs, called forth the more from the contrast which her aunt's mildness presented to Miss Harcourt's harshness and Caroline's violent anger; and from the painful longing to say that her first disobedience was not entirely her own fault.

"Did you remember that I had expressly forbidden either of you to attempt to move it?"

"Yes," replied Ellen again, and an exclamation at the apparent hardihood of her conduct escaped from both Miss Harcourt and Caroline.

"And yet you persisted, Ellen: this is indeed a strange contradiction to your seemingly sincere sorrow for a similar fault a few months back. What did you move it for?"

For full a minute Ellen hesitated, thus unhappily con-

firming the suspicion that when she did reply it was another equivocation.

"To get a book which had fallen behind."

"I do not know how a book could have fallen behind, unless it had been put or thrown there, Ellen ; you said, too, that you did not replace the broken flower for the purpose of concealment. I hardly know how to believe either of these assertions. Why did you leave the room just now?"

"Because—because—I knew you would question me, and—and—I felt I should not have courage to speak the truth—and I knew—you would be so—so displeased." The words were scarcely articulate.

"I should have been better satisfied, Ellen, if your fear of my displeasure had prevented the committal of your first fault, not to aggravate it so sinfully by both acted and spoken untruths. Painful as it is to me in this season of festivity and enjoyment to inflict suffering, I should share your sin if I did not adopt some measures to endeavour at least to make you remember and so avoid it in future. I have told you so very often that it is not me you mostly offend when you speak or act falsely, but God Himself—who is Truth—that I fear words alone will be of no avail. Go to your own room, Ellen ; perhaps solitude and thought, when your brother and cousins are so happy and unrestrained, may bring you to a sense of your aggravated misconduct better than anything else. You will not leave your apartment, except for the hours of devotion and exercise—which you will take with Ellis, not with me—till I think you have had sufficient time to reflect on all I have said to you on this subject."

Ellen quitted the room without answering ; but it was several minutes before Mrs. Hamilton could sufficiently conquer the very painful feelings which her niece's conduct and her own compelled severity excited, to enter into her daughters' amusements ; but she would not punish them for the misconduct of another, and by her exertions, temper to Caroline and cheerfulness to Emmeline (whose tears of sympathy had almost kept pace with Ellen's of sorrow) gradually returned, and their book became as delightful a recreation as it had been before.

Great was Edward's grief and consternation when he found the effects of what was actually in the first instance his fault ; but he had not sufficient boldness to say so. His aunt had expressly said it was the untruth that had occasioned her greatest displeasure, that if the disobedience had been confessed at once, she would, in consideration of the season, have forgiven it with a very slight rebuke. "Now," he thought, "it is only the disobedience with which I am concerned, and if I confess it was mostly my fault, it won't help Ellen in the least—so what is the use of my acknowledging it? Of course, if she wishes it, I will ; but how could she tell such a deliberate story?"

That he was acting one of equal deliberation, and of far more culpability if possible—for he was permitting her to bear the whole weight of his fault—never struck him ; if it did, he did not at all understand or believe it. He went to his sister, and offered to confess his share in her fault, and when—as he fully expected—she begged him not, that it could do her no good, and perhaps only get him punished too, his conscience was so perfectly satisfied, that he actually took upon himself

to ask her how she could be so foolish and wrong as, when she was asked, not to allow that she had moved it at once—

“It would have been all right then,” he said, and added, almost with irritation, “and I should not have been teased with the thought of your being in disgrace just now, when I wanted so much to enjoy myself.”

“Do not think about me, then, Edward,” was his sister’s reply; “I know the untruth is entirely my own fault, so why should it torment you; if I could but always tell and act the truth, and not be so very, very frightened—oh, how I wonder if I ever shall!” and she leaned her head on her arms which rested on the table, so despondingly, so sorrowfully, that Edward felt too uncomfortable to remain with her. He was satisfied that he could not help her; but the disagreeable thought would come, that if he had not tempted her to disobey, she would have had no temptation to tell an untruth, and so he sought a variety of active amusements to get rid of the feeling. The continuation of the entertaining astronomical lecture, too, was so very delightful, and Thursday and Friday morning brought so many enjoyments, that he almost forgot her, till startled back into self-reproach by finding, that she was not to accompany them on Friday evening to Mr. Howard’s, whose great pleasure was to collect young people around him, and whose soirée in the Christmas holidays, and whose day in the country at Midsummer, were anticipated by girls and boys, great and small, with such delight, as to pervade the whole year round. Caroline never refused to join Mr. Howard’s parties, though they were “juvenile;” and Percy always declared they were as unlike any other person’s as Mr.

Howard was unlike a schoolmaster." Ellen had so enjoyed the day in the country, that, timid as she was, she had looked forward to Friday with almost as much delight as Emmeline.

In vain Emmeline, Edward, Percy, Herbert, and even Mr. Hamilton entreated, that she might be permitted to go. Mrs. Hamilton's own kind heart pleaded quite as strongly, but she remained firm.

"Do not ask me, my dear children," she said, almost as beseechingly as they had implored; "I do assure you it is quite as much, if not more, pain to me on this occasion to refuse, as it is for you all to be refused. If it were the first, second, or even third time that Ellen had disregarded truth, I would yield for your sakes; and in the hope that the indulgence would produce as good an effect as continued severity; but I cannot hope this now. The habit is, I fear, so deeply rooted, that nothing but firmness in inflicting pain, whenever it is committed, will succeed in eradicating it. God grant I may remove it at last."

The tone and words were so earnest, so sad, that not only did her children cease in their intercession, but all felt still more forcibly the solemn importance of the virtue, in which Ellen had so failed, from the effect of her conduct upon their mother. She was always grieved when they had done wrong, but they never remembered seeing her so very sad as now. Edward, indeed, could scarcely understand this as his cousins did; but as his aunt still only alluded to the untruth, the qualm of conscience was again silenced, for he had only caused the disobedience. Emmeline asked timidly if she might remain with Ellen, and Edward followed her

example, thinking himself very magnanimous in so doing; but both were refused—and surely he had done enough!

All went—Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Harcourt, as well as the young people; and it was such a happy evening! First, there was the orrery, that Mr. Howard had prevailed on the lecturer to display first at his house, and Edward was almost wild in his delight; and then there were some games and intellectual puzzles, that made them all think, as well as enjoy; and then there was some music and singing and dancing, and everything was so quiet and orderly, and yet so full of youthful enjoyment, that it was not much wonder there was no longer any room for a sorrowful thought, in any of the young party from Oakwood. Mrs. Hamilton alone thought of Ellen, and again and again accused herself of too great harshness; for, perhaps, after all, it might have no better effect than kindness; but what could she do? She almost envied the quiet, unruffled unconcern of less anxious guardians; but for her to feel indifferent to her responsibility was impossible. Ellen was so often unwell, that her absence did not occasion so much remark as her brother's or either of her cousins would.—“Mamma did not wish her to come,” was the answer she had desired the children to give to any inquiries, and her character for indulgence was so generally known, that no one suspected anything more than indisposition. Annie Grahame's dislike to Ellen might have made her more suspicious, but she was not there. Cecil and Lilla were, with their father, but Miss Grahame did not condescend to attend Mr. Howard's “juvenile” parties;

and Caroline, though she would not have allowed it even to herself, was both happier, and much more inclined to enjoy herself, with the amusements and society offered to her when Annie was not at a party, than when she was.

The next night, to Ellen's disposition, was a greater trial than the Friday. She neither expected, nor hardly wished to be allowed, to go to Mr. Howard's, though, as the affectionate Emmeline had come to wish her good night, and with tears in her eyes repeated her regrets that she was not to go, she felt the bitter disappointment more than in the morning she had thought possible; but Saturday night it had been her aunt's custom, from the time she had been at Oakwood, to visit her daughters and niece before they went to sleep, and prepare them for their Sabbath's rest and enjoyment, by an examination of their conduct during the past week, and full forgiveness of anything that had been wrong. When younger, Mrs. Hamilton had attended to this duty every night; but wishing to give them a habit of private prayer and self-examination, independent of her, she had, after Emmeline was twelve years old, set apart the Saturday night, until they were fifteen—old enough for her to relinquish it altogether. It had been such a habit with her own children, that they felt it perfectly natural; but with Ellen and Edward, from their never having been accustomed to it as young children, she had never felt the duty understood by them, or as satisfactorily performed by herself as with her own. Still, Ellen looked forward to this night as the termination of her banishment; for great indeed was the offence whose correction extended over the

Sabbath. Ellen could not remember one instance since she had been at Oakwood, and when she heard the doors of her cousins' rooms successively close, and her aunt's step retreating without approaching hers, she did, indeed, believe herself irreclaimably wicked, or her kind good aunt would, at least, have come to her. Mrs. Hamilton had purposely refrained from indulging her own inclinations, as well as comforting Ellen, hoping still more to impress upon her how greatly she had sinned. The impossibility of her perfectly comprehending her niece's character, while the poor child felt it such a sacred duty to victimise herself, made her far more severe than she would have been, could she have known her real disposition ; but how was it possible she could believe Ellen's grief as deep and remorseful as it seemed, when a short time afterwards she would commit the same faults? Her task was infinitely more difficult and perplexing than less anxious mothers can have the least idea of.

CHAPTER X.

PAIN AND PENITENCE.—TRUTH IMPRESSED, AND
RECONCILIATION.—THE FAMILY TREE.

IN feverish dreams of her parents, recalling both their deaths, and with alternate wakefulness, fraught with those deadly incomprehensible terrors which some poor children of strong imagination know so well, Ellen's night passed; and the next morning she rose, with that painful throbbing in her throat and temples, which always ended with one of those intense and exhausting headaches to which she had been so subject, but which her aunt's care and Mr. Maitland's remedies had much decreased, both in frequency and violence. She went to church, however, with the family, as usual.

"Remain out, Edward!" Percy exclaimed, as they neared the house; "the old year is taking leave of us in such a glorious mood, that Tiny and I are going to ruralise and poetise till dinner—will you come with us?—and you, Ellen?"

Ellen withdrew her arm from her brother's, saying, as she did so—

"Go, dear Edward, I am very tired, and would rather not."

"Tired! and with this short walk; and you really do look as if you were—what is the matter, Ellen? you are not well."

His sister did not reply, but shrinking from the look which Mrs. Hamilton, who was passing at the moment, fixed earnestly upon her, she ran into the house.

Edward again felt uncomfortable, in fact, he had done so, so often since the Tuesday morning, that his temper was not half so good as usual. He did not choose to acknowledge, even to himself, that the uncomfortable feeling was self-reproach, and so he vented it more than once in irritation against Ellen, declaring it was so disagreeable she should be in disgrace just then.

It was Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's custom always to dine on Sundays at half-past one, to allow those of their household who were unable to attend divine service in the morning to go in the afternoon. With regard to themselves and their children they pursued a plan, which many rigid religionists might, perhaps, have condemned, and yet its fruits were very promising. Their great wish was to make the Sabbath a day of love, divine and domestic; to make their children look to it with joy and anticipation throughout the week as a day quite distinct in its enjoyment from any other; and for this reason, while their children were young, they only went to church in the morning, the afternoons were devoted to teaching them to know and to love God in His works as well as word, and their evenings to such quiet but happy amusements and literature, as would fill their young hearts with increased thankfulness for their very happy lot. As they grew older, they were perfectly at liberty to do as they pleased with regard to the afternoon church. Herbert, whose

ardent desire to enter the ministry increased with his years, generally spent the greater part of Sunday with Mr. Howard, with his parents' glad and full consent. The contemplation of serious things was his greatest happiness, but Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton did not expect that all their other children were to be like him. They were contented, and intensely thankful also, to perceive that diverse as were their characters, still the constant sense of God's presence and of His infinite love was active and earnest in them all, inciting love and reverence for Herbert, even though they could not sympathise with him entirely. Another peculiarity of Mr. Hamilton consisted in his permitting no *Sunday* schools at Aveling and his other villages. The Saturday afternoons were set apart instead of the Sunday. He wished his wife, and daughters when they were old enough, to superintend them, and help the children in preparing for the Sunday services and Sunday enjoyments; but he particularly disliked the system of overwork on a day of rest, which could not fail to be the case, if there were schools to attend to, twice or three times a day as well as church.

It being the last day of the old year, Mr. Howard had expressed a wish that Percy and Edward as well as Herbert should attend church that afternoon, and the lads, without the least reluctance, consented; Mr. Hamilton and Miss Harcourt were going too, and Caroline and Emmeline, of their own accord, asked permission to accompany them. Ellen's pale suffering face had so haunted her aunt, that she could not think of anything else, and remained for a very much longer

time than was usual to her character in a state of indecision. The next night was her children's ball, and it was, too, the first day of a new year—always in her happy circle a festival of joy and thankfulness. Ellen's face certainly looked as if she had suffered quite enough to prevent the recurrence of her fault, but so it had always done, and yet, before she could possibly have forgotten its consequences, she failed again. Mrs. Hamilton sat for some time, after her children had left her, in meditation, trying to silence the pleadings of affection, and listen only to reason; as to whether continued severity or returning kindness would be the more effective, and save both Ellen and herself any further pain.

To the child herself physical suffering was so increasing as gradually to deaden mental, till at last it became so severe, that she felt sick and faint. She knew the medicine she was in the habit of taking when similarly suffering, and the lotion which her aunt applied to her forehead, and which always succeeded in removing the excessive throbbing, were both in Mrs. Hamilton's dressing-room, but it seemed quite impossible that she could get at them, for she did not like to leave her room without permission, nor did she feel as if she could walk so far, her head throbbing with increased violence with every step she took. At length, she summoned sufficient courage to ring the bell, and beg Fanny to ask Ellis to come to her. The girl, who had been already dreadfully concerned that Miss Ellen had eaten no dinner, and on Sunday too! gave such an account of her, that the housekeeper hastened to her

directly, and begged her to let her go for her mistress—it was so lucky she had not gone to church—but Ellen clung to her, imploring her not.

“Dear, dear Ellis, get me the medicine, and bathe my forehead yourself; I shall get well then in an hour or two, without giving my aunt any trouble; pray, pray don’t tell her—I scarcely feel the pain when she is nursing and soothing me; but I do not deserve that now, and I am afraid I never shall.”

“But indeed, Miss Ellen, she will be displeased if I do not. Why, only the other morning she was quite concerned that I had not told her Jane was ill directly, and went herself two or three times every day to see she had every thing proper and comfortable.”

“But that is quite different, dear Ellis; do get the lotion; I feel as if I could not bear this pain much longer without crying; you can tell her afterwards, if you think you ought.”

And seeing that farther argument only increased the poor child’s sufferings, Ellis promised, and left her. Ellen leant her forehead against the side of her little bed, and held the curtain tightly clasped, as if so to prevent the utterance of the hysteric sob that would rise in her throat, though she did not know what it was. But the wholly unexpected sound of Mrs. Hamilton’s voice saying close by her, “I am afraid you have one of your very bad headaches, Ellen,” so startled her, as to make her raise her head suddenly; and the movement caused such agony, that, spite of all her efforts, she could not prevent an almost convulsive cry of pain.

“My dear child! I had no idea of pain like this;

why did you not send for me ? We have always prevented its becoming so very violent by taking it in time, my Ellen."

"Miss Ellen would not let me go for you, Madam," rejoined Ellis, who, to her mistress's inexpressible relief, was close at hand with the remedies she wanted, and she repeated what the child had said.

"Again your old mistake, Ellen. I would so much, so very much rather hear you say you were *resolved* to deserve my love, than that you did not merit it. Why should you not deserve it as well as your brother and cousins, if you determined with all your heart to try and not do anything to lessen it ? Nothing is so likely to prevent your even endeavouring to deserve it, as the mistaken fancy that you never shall ; but you are too unwell to listen to me now ; we must try all we can to remove this terrible pain, and then see if we can bring back happiness too."

And for above an hour did Mrs. Hamilton, with the most patient tenderness, apply the usual remedies, cheered by finding that, though much more slowly than usual, still by degrees the violence of the pain did subside, and the hysterical affection give way to natural and quiet tears. Exhaustion produced a deep though not very long sleep, and after watching her some few minutes very anxiously, Mrs. Hamilton sat down by her bed, and half unconsciously drew towards her Ellen's little Bible, which lay open on the table, as if it had been only lately used. Several loose papers were between the leaves ; her eyes filled with tears as she read on one of them a little prayer, touching from the very childishness of the language and imperfect writing, beseeching her Father in

Heaven in His great mercy to forgive her sin, and give her courage to speak the truth, to help her not to be so frightened, but to guide her in her difficult path. Mrs. Hamilton little guessed how difficult it was, but she hoped more from the effects of her present penitence than she had done yet. She had copied, too, several verses from the various parts of Old and New Testament which were condemnatory of falsehood, and her aunt felt no longer undecided as to her course of action.

“You have employed your solitary hours so well, my dear Ellen,” she said, as when the child awoke, and looked anxiously towards her—she kissed her cheek with even more than her usual fondness—“that I scarcely require your assurance of repentance or promises of amendment. When you have taken some coffee, and think you are well enough to listen to me, I will read you an illustration of the fearful sin of falsehood from the Old Testament, which I do not think I have yet pointed out to you—Ananias and Sapphira: I see you remember.”

And when Ellen had taken the delicious cup of coffee, which her aunt had ordered should be ready for her directly she awoke, and sat up, though her head was still so weak it required the support of a pillow, yet she seemed so revived, so almost happy, from the mesmeric effect of that warm fond kiss, that her aunt did not hesitate to continue the lesson she was so anxious to impress, while the mind and heart were softened to receive it. She turned to the fourth chapter of the second book of Kings, and after briefly relating the story of Naaman,—for she did not wish to divert Ellen’s attention from the one important subject, by giving any new ideas,—

she read from the 20th verse to the end, and so brought the nature of Gehazi's sin and its awful punishment, at the hand of God himself (for the prophet was merely an instrument of the Eternal, he had no power in himself to call the disease of leprosy on his servant) to Ellen's mind, that she never forgot it.

"Do you think Elisha knew where he had been, and what he had done before he asked him?" she ventured timidly to inquire, as her aunt ceased; "Gehazi had told a falsehood already to Naaman. Do you think God punished that or his falsehood to Elisha?"

"Most probably he punished both, my love. Elisha no doubt knew how his servant had been employed in his absence, in fact he tells him so"—and she read the 26th verse again—"but he asked him whence he had come, to give him an opportunity for a full confession of his first sin, which then, no doubt would, after some slight rebuke, have been pardoned. It was a very great fault at first, but the mercy of God was then, as it is now, so infinite so forgiving, that, had Elisha's question recalled Gehazi to a sense of his great guilt and excited real repentance, his punishment would have been averted. But his aggravated and repeated falsehood called down on him a chastisement most terrible even to think about. Leprosy was not merely a dreadful disease in itself, but it cut him off, from all the blessings and joys not only of social life but of domestic; because, as God had said it should cleave to his seed as well as to himself, he could never find any one who would dare to love him, and he must have been compelled to lonely misery all his life."

"It was a very dreadful punishment," repeated Ellen, fearfully.

"It was, dearest; but it was merciful notwithstanding. If God had passed it by, and permitted Gehazi to continue his sinful course, without any check or chastisement, that would recall him to a sense of better things, and a wish to pursue them, he might have continued apparently very happy in this life, to be miserable for ever in the next; to be banished for ever from God and His good angels; and would not that have been still more dreadful than the heaviest suffering here?—In those times God manifested his judgments through His prophets directly. That is not the case now, but He has given us His word to tell us, by history as well as precept, those things that are pleasing to Him, and those which excite His anger; and which, if not corrected while we are in this world, will cause our condemnation when our souls appear before Him in judgment, and when we cannot correct them if we would. Now children, and even young people, cannot know these things as well as their parents and guardians can, and if we neglect to teach them right and wrong, God is more angry with us than with them, as He tells Ezekiel." She read from the 19th to the 22d verse of the third chapter, and explained it, so that Ellen could clearly understand it, and then said, "And now, my dear Ellen, can you quite understand and quite feel why I have caused you so much pain, and been—as I dare say you have felt—so very, very severe?"

Ellen's arms were round her neck in a moment, and her head cradled on her bosom, as her sole reply, for she felt she could not speak at first without crying again.

"I wish I could remember that God sees me wherever

"I am," she said after a pause, and very sadly. "I am so frightened when I think of any body's anger, even Caroline's, that I cannot remember anything else."

"Did you notice the Psalm we read the day before yesterday, my dear Ellen, in the morning lesson?"

The child had not, and her aunt, turning to the 129th, read the first twelve and the two last verses carefully with her, adding—

"Suppose you learn one verse for me every morning, till you can repeat the whole fourteen perfectly, and I think that will help you to remember it, my Ellen, and prove to me that you really are anxious to correct yourself; and now one word more, and I think I shall have talked to you quite enough."

"Indeed, indeed I am not tired, dear Aunt," replied Ellen, very earnestly; "I feel when you are talking to me as if I never could be naughty again. Oh! how I wish I never were."

"I am not so unconscionable as to expect you to have no faults, my dear child; all I wish you to attend to, is more obedience to my commands. I have not said anything about your disobedience, because your untruth was of still more consequence, but that grieved me too, for disobedience to me is also disobedience to God, for He has commanded you to obey your parents and guardians; and as you said you remembered I had told you not to move the flower-stand, I cannot imagine what could have induced you so wilfully to disobey me."

Ellen looked up in her face with such earnest wistful eyes, that Mrs. Hamilton felt puzzled, but as she did not speak, and laid her head again on its resting-place, to hide the tears that rose, her aunt merely added—

"But as I do not wish to inflict any further pain, I will not say anything more about it; only remember, that though I may be displeased if you disobey me again, an instant and full confession will soon gain my forgiveness; and that though I will never doubt your word, still, if I discover another untruth, it will and must oblige me to adopt still severer measures, pain as it will be to myself. Do not tremble so, my Ellen, you know you can prevent it; and remember too that whenever you fail in truth, you punish me as well as yourself," and Mrs. Hamilton fondly kissed her as she spoke.

Light steps and a ringing laugh at that moment sounded in the passage, and Emmeline, though she certainly did ask if she might enter, scarcely waited for an answer, before she bounded in, the very personification of health and joy.

"Mamma, Papa wants to know if we may not have tea to-night, and if we may not have Ellen's company too?"

"It is New Year's Eve," pleaded another joyous voice, and Percy's brown head just intruded itself through the half-opened door; "and our tree will not be half enjoyable unless we are all there."

"I had really forgotten your tree, my dear children, but I am glad Papa and you all have remembered it. Come in, Percy; Ellen will, I dare say, admit you into her room."

"He raced me all round the gallery, Mamma, declaring he would give you Papa's message, or so take away my breath, that even if I outstripped him, I should not be able, but I have, you see, sir."

"Only because I did not know whether it was quite proper to enter a young lady's room. But do come, Mamma; Mr. Howard is with us as usual, and we are all *au desespoir* for you and our little Ellen—she *may* come, I can read it in your eyes."

"Are you well enough, my love? Do you think this poor little head will permit you to join us?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, anxiously, for the sudden joy that gleamed in Ellen's eyes at the idea of joining the family, told what the disappointment would be if she could not.

"It does not hurt me at all if I can rest it, Aunt; but I am afraid it will not let me walk," she added, sorrowfully, as the attempt to walk caused it to throb again.

"Never mind, Lelly, even if you cannot walk; you shall make use of my pedestrian powers," replied Percy, joyously; "rest your head on my shoulder—that's it—I should make a capital nurse I declare; should I not, Mamma?"

And gaily answering in the affirmative, his mother could scarcely prevent a throb of pride, as she looked on his fine manly face beaming with benevolent kindness on his little cousin, whom he had tenderly lifted in his arms, and checked his boisterous mirth and rapid stride to accommodate her.

"You are not quite so light as Tiny, but she is all air, I expect she will evaporate some day:—never mind your hair, it does very well."

"Stop, I will smooth it in a moment," exclaimed Emmeline, eagerly; "it is Sunday, Percy, she shall look well."

"You had better let me do it, Emmy," said her

mother, smiling; "your cousin's head can only bear very tender handling to-night. There, that will do—and I am quite ready to attend you."

The lights, the joyous voices, even her uncle's kind greeting, almost overpowered poor Ellen; as Percy, still preserving his character of an admirable nurse, laid her carefully on a couch in the sitting-room, where not only tea was waiting, but the celebrated family tree, which Mrs. Hamilton's anxiety and Ellen's sorrow had caused them both to forget, was displayed with even more than usual taste and beauty.

Mr. Hamilton, when young, had been a great deal with his father in Germany, Denmark and Sweden, and brought from the first and latter country certain domestic observances which had especially pleased him, as so greatly enhancing the enjoyments of home, and helping to a right understanding between parents and children, by increasing their mutual love and confidence. The family tree, or Christmas Tree, as it was called, was one of these, and from their earliest years it had been one of the children's greatest delights on New Year's Eve. Of course, as they grew older, and their tastes improved, the tree itself, its suspended presents, and its surrounding decorations increased in beauty, and it had never been prettier than it was this year. The whole of the preceding afternoon had the young artists laboured in preparing it, for of course, as the next day was Sunday, it was obliged to be all finished by the Saturday night; the servants eager in all things to enhance the happiness of those whose parents made them so happy, did not care what trouble they took to help them. They always selected the

room in which there was a very lofty and very deep oriel window, in the centre of which recess (which was almost as large as a moderately sized room) they placed *the* tree, which was a very large gracefully-cut spruce fir; it was placed in a tub filled with the same soil as that in which the tree grew, so that by watering and care it remained fresh for some time. The tub which contained it, was completely hidden by the flowering shrubs that were placed round it, rising in an expanding pyramid, by means of several flower-stands, till the recess seemed one mass of leaf and flower; amongst which the superb scarlet geranium, that in Devonshire grows so luxuriantly all through the winter, shining against its own beautiful leaf, the brilliant berries of the holly, with their dark glistening branches, the snow-berry and flowering myrtle, shone pre-eminent. Small lamps glittered through the flowers, and were suspended in sufficient profusion from the pendent branches of the tree to half reveal and half hide the various gifts and treasures that were there deposited; and altogether the effect from every part of the room, was really striking.

The tree always remained till after their ball, but, the interchange of gifts which took place on New Year's Eve, causing so many peculiarly happy and home feelings, was confined to the family group; Mr. Howard always included. Many weeks before had each individual worked at his own secret undertaking. If it could not all be done in private, no questions were ever asked, and each helped the other, to keep it at least from their parents till the eventful night itself. They formed so large a party altogether, as little tokens of

affection between the brothers and sisters were also exchanged, that the tree was quite loaded, and many a time had Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton discovered some trait of character or some ruling fancy, even in such a simple thing as the manufacture and presentation of home gifts. Their own idea of family ties was so strong and so holy, that one great aim in the education of their children was to make them not only *love* each other, but have thought and attention for individual feelings and wishes, and so heighten feeling by action, not depend entirely on natural ties. Mrs. Hamilton had known many young persons who were lavish in attentions and even presents to friends, but never imagined that their own home circle had the first and strongest claim to kindness, whether of word or deed. She knew that affections and thought lavished on comparative strangers never radiated on home, but that when given to home *first*, they shed light and kindness far and near.

Their tea was indeed a mirthful one; Ellen had been very fearful of meeting Mr. Howard, for she thought he must have been told how naughty she had been, but if he had, there was nothing in his manner to say so; for he shook hands with her, and even kissed her most kindly, and told her, laughingly, that she must be quite well by the next night, or how was she to dance? That he thought it would be a good thing if Emmeline could give her a little of her dancing mania, as she hardly ever only walked, even when she called herself quite sober. Edward, every passing thought of self-reproach banished by his sister's return to favour, was in the wildest spirits; Percy and Emmeline seemed to have laid a wager who could say the wittiest things and

laugh the most. Herbert was very quiet, but looking as happy as the rest, and quite entering into their mirth, and showing all sorts of little gentle attentions to Ellen, who had seemed to shrink from his eye, more than from all the others. Caroline fully entered into the spirit of the evening, but neither she nor Miss Harcourt took the same notice of Ellen as the rest. The person who was to act the Wizard's part, and by means of a long wand detach the various treasures from the tree, and carry them to the owners whose names they bore, was always chosen by lot; and great was the delight of the young party when this night the office fell on Mr. Howard. No one seemed more pleased than himself, performing it with such a spirit of enjoyment and originality, that a general vote declared him the very choicest Wizard they had ever had. To enumerate all the contents of that marvellous tree would be impossible. Their parents' gifts to each of them were not in the tree, but always given afterwards; but great was the delight, when after a terrible tussle to detach a large roll of cloth, down it came, right on Mr. Howard's head, and almost enveloped him with its folds, and proved to be a beautiful cover, which he had long desired for a favorite table in his drawing-room; at the embroidered border of which, not only the three girls, but Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Harcourt had all worked, as a joint offspring of love and respect. This good man was so charmed, that he declared he would not use his wand again till he had had full five minutes to admire it. Then there was a very pretty comfortable pair of slippers, worked by Caroline and Emmeline for their father, and a pair of braces worked by Ellen, all

accompanied by some most ludicrous, but very clever verses from Percy. Edward; who was very ingenious, had turned a very pretty stand for his uncle to put his watch in at night; and manufactured two little vessels out of cork for his aunt, so delicately and neatly, that she promised him they should stand on the mantelpiece of her dressing-room as long as they would last. Caroline had knitted her mother a very pretty bag, and Emmeline and Ellen had collected for her a variety of leaves throughout the year, and arranged them with great taste, both as to grouping and tinting, in a sort of small herbal, with two or three lines of poetry, selected and carefully written by each alternately, attached to each page. Mrs. Hamilton was excessively pleased, as she was also with a portfolio formed by drawings from both her boys, and tastefully made up by Miss Harcourt; and with their gifts to their father, a correct and most beautifully written out Greek poem, which Mr. Hamilton had several months, if not more than a year before, expressed a wish to possess, but the volume which contained it was so scarce, and so expensive from the quantity of uninteresting matter in which the gem was buried, that he had given up all thought of it. Herbert, however, had not, and never rested from the time his father spoke till he had found and copied it—a task of no small difficulty, for the original was in many parts almost entirely effaced, and if Herbert had not been an admirable Greek scholar, and a quick imagination as to what it ought to be, Mr. Howard himself had said he could not have succeeded. The writing of the Greek character was most beautiful, and Percy, in imitation of the ancient missals, had

designed and painted an elegant illuminated border round it and beautiful cover, forming a thin volume, so valuable, their father delighted them by saying, that he would not exchange it for twenty of the most precious volumes in his library. Such evidences of the home influence they had given, in permitting leisure for the cultivation of taste and imagination, teaching them the beautiful, and opening innumerable resources of enjoyment within themselves, and thence allowing them to enhance the pleasures of others, were indeed most gratifying to those earnest and affectionate guardians. From their earliest years they had been taught, that to give the greatest amount of pleasure to their parents, their gifts must be all, or at least have something in them, of their own workmanship, and to enable them to do this, the lads had been taught in their hours of recreation to use all sorts of tools, visiting and knowing something of a variety of handicrafts; and the girls to work and draw, and even bring the stores of Nature to their aid when needed, as in the present case, with Emmeline and Ellen's tasteful gift.

Our young readers must call upon their own imagination as to the other treasures of this valuable tree, for as they would, no doubt, like to know what sort of New Year's gifts Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had in store for their children (for Miss Harcourt too, for they never omitted her), we really must not linger round it any longer. Poor Ellen, indeed, had the pain of feeling that her fault and its consequences had prevented the completion of her purse for Percy, and a chain for Edward, and her cheek burned very painfully when Mr. Howard, after exhausting the tree, exclaimed—

"Nothing from Ellen for Percy and Edward. Young gentlemen, have you been receiving any gifts in secret?—out with them if you have—it is against all law and propriety."

"We shall receive them next week, most potent conjuror, as you ought to have known without inquiring," answered Percy, directly; and bending over Ellen, by whom he chanced to be standing, he said, kindly, "Never mind, Lelly, you will have time to finish them both next week."

"Do not say 'never mind,' my dear boy, though I admire and sympathize in your kind care of your cousin's feelings," said his mother, in the same low tone, as only to be heard by him and Ellen. (Mr. Howard was very quick-sighted, and he took Percy's jest and turned off all farther notice of his words). "Even such a little thing as this in Ellen's case is pain, and can only be felt as such; we do not lessen it by denying it, my Ellen, do we?"

"I would rather feel it, if it would help me to remember," was Ellen's earnest and humble reply; adding, "but I thank you, dear Percy—you are so kind."

"Not a bit," was his laughing answer. "Why, what in the world is this?" he added; "I thought the tree was exhausted."

"So it is, but this was hid at its root," replied Mr. Howard, "and though it is directed to Caroline, it is somewhat too heavy for my wand, and must reach her in a more natural way."

"Why, it is my flower, my own beautiful flower, or one exactly like it at least," exclaimed Caroline, joyfully, as, removing a hollow pyramid of green and white paper,

a myrtle was discovered of the same rare kind, and almost in as beautiful flower as the one whose death had caused such increased coldness in her feelings towards Ellen. "How did it come? who could have procured it for me?"

"Ellis sent for it at my request, dear Caroline," answered Ellen. "She said they were to be purchased from the gardener at Powderham, and if it were possible to send any one so far, she would endeavour to get one for me; she told me yesterday she had succeeded, and I thought she gave it you, as I begged her, directly; I had no opportunity to tell you before, but I was so very, very sorry I had hurt your flower."

"Ellis was very wise to put it amongst the pretty things of this evening, instead of obeying you," said her uncle, kindly; "and I really am glad that your great desire to replace it made her think of sending for it, for though I meant to have given Caroline another, I had so many things on my mind this week that it escaped me; and I know they are so much sought for, Wilson has scarcely ever one on hand."

"Indeed, Papa, you were much too kind to think about it at all," said Caroline, very earnestly. "I am afraid, if you knew how very cross and unkind the loss of the other made me, you would have withdrawn your idea of such indulgence. I am very much obliged to you, Ellen," she continued, much more cordially than she had yet spoken to her cousin; "I did not deserve it even from you, for I worked myself into such an ill temper, as almost to believe you did it purposely, and I had no right to think that."

It did indeed bear out its language, that pretty flower,

for, with this one coldness removed—though Mrs. Hamilton's trembling heart dared not hope it would be lasting—love now reigned pre-eminent. Every happy feeling increased when in the presents from their parents each recognized something that had been wished for, though they never remembered expressing it. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were always united in these New Year's gifts, though tokens of approval or occasional indulgences were often given separately. There were a set of most beautiful engravings for Percy, which for the last three or four months he had been most anxious to possess; but with the recollection of former folly very fresh in his memory, he had actually succeeded in driving them from his mind, and gave them up as unattainable, till he was richer at least. For Herbert there was a fine edition of the Greek tragedians in their original, as beautiful a work of art, in its "getting up," as Percy called it, as its letter-press, which to Herbert was beyond all price. Edward was almost wild, as his uncle and aunt telling him he was fourteen next March, and might not be with them next New Year's eve, presented him with a treasure coveted beyond all other, a gold watch. (His father's had been given by his mother as a parting gift to Captain Cameron.) Mr. Howard declared it was much too good for a sailor, and would be lost his first voyage; he had much better hand it over to the Rector, promising to take every care of it; but looking so mischievous, Edward vowed it should not get near his hand. For Caroline was a most complete and elegantly fitted-up embroidery-box, which quite charmed her, for it was exactly like, if not more tasteful and complete,

than one Annie Grahame had brought from London, and which she had wondered, Caroline could "exist" without. As Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton found that she could not only comfortably "exist," but much as she admired and had at first so coveted it, as to have a hard battle with discontent, she had never even hinted that it might be useful. As they perceived that her mind was so happily engrossed by the idea of the pleasure her gifts would bestow, as not to cast a thought upon Annie's superior box, they indulged themselves and their child, and were more than repaid by the beaming look of delight with which it was received. For Emmeline was a parcel almost as large as herself, Percy declared. "A drawing-box all to yourself, Tiny! Thank goodness! My chalks and pencils have some chance of being let alone; I really ought to thank Mamma and Papa quite as much, if not more than you, considering that in giving you a new possession they have preserved me an old one, which I began to suspect would desert me piece by piece. What, more?" he continued, laughing at his sister's almost scream of delight, as she undid the covering of a book and found it to be the complete poem of the 'Lady of the Lake,' extracts of which she had read in the reviews, and so revelled in them, child as she was, as to commit them all to memory, with scarce an effort, only longing to know the whole story.

"And now, Lelly, what is your secret? still larger than Tiny's, what can it be? Come guess, I have you in my power, for you are not strong enough to race me as Em. would, and so I will be more merciful. What

of all things would you like the best?—one, two, three guesses, and then I'll relieve you; I want to know if Papa and Mamma have looked into your secret chamber of wishes, as they have done in all of ours."

"Do not be afraid of guessing, Ellen; you are so very quiet, that your secret chamber of wishes, as Percy calls it, is more concealed than any of the others," said her uncle, smiling; "I am always obliged to refer to your Aunt."

"Come, Lell, speak or I will indite you as unworthy of anything. What did you say? a desk? Hurrah! then, there it is; and what a beauty—rosewood and mother-of-pearl—just fitted for an elegant young lady. How could Mamma have found out so exactly? you have used the old shabby thing Herbert lent you as quietly and contentedly as if there could not be a better. Do let us examine it!" and he dragged a table to her sofa, and displayed to the delighted child all its fittings-up, and its conveniences, and the pretty pen-holder and pencil-case, and fancy wafers, and sealing-wax, and a little gold seal with her own name, and everything that could possibly be thought of. "And even a secret drawer," exclaimed Percy, quite proud of the discovery. "Do look, Ellen; why, you can keep all sorts of secrets there, for no one would be as clever as I am to find out the spring without being told, and of course I should not betray it," and he laughingly sent away everybody while he explained to Ellen the spring. For some little while longer did the young party examine and re-examine and talk of their own and each other's treasures. And then Mr. Hamilton bade them remember, that, though

it was New Year's Eve, it was Sunday evening, too,* and that he had deferred the hour of evening-prayer till ten, that they might have time to keep both, and so not lose the sacred music which was always part of their Sunday recreation, to put away their things, and adjourn to their music-room. And he was obeyed in a very few minutes, for though they might have preferred lingering and talking where they were, what exertion could be too great for those who so thought of, so cared for them!

Returning happiness had had such a beneficial effect, that, though Ellen still looked pale enough for her aunt not to feel quite comfortable about her, she could walk without any return of pain, and in one or two hymns even join her voice with her cousins', though it was weaker than usual. However small in appearance the talent for music, still Mrs. Hamilton cultivated it, in her boys as well as her girls, simply for the sake of giving them home-resources and amusements that could be pursued together; she thought it such a mistaken notion in education to imagine that only perfection was worth attaining in the fine arts, and that, if there were not talent enough for that, it was better not attempted. Many a home might have envied the feelings with which

* While passing through the press, the scene of the Family Tree has been strongly objected to by a valued Christian friend, as being enacted on the Sunday evening. It was too late then to repair the error. The Author can only express her sincere regret for a fault originating in an insufficient knowledge of the Christian feeling towards the Sabbath, and most earnestly trusts the error may be pardoned.

old and young, to the lowest domestics, sought their pillows that night ; for Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, so lavish in their indulgence to their children, never forgot that for their domestics and retainers there were also claims on New Year's Eve ; and the servants' hall and every cottage which called Mr. Hamilton landlord, had vied in happiness with his own.

Mrs. Hamilton had visited Ellen the last thing, to see that she was quite comfortable, and that there was no return of pain ; and she was almost startled, and certainly still more bewildered as to how such a depth of feeling could exist with such a real childish liability to error, and why it should be so carefully concealed, by the way in which Ellen clung to her, as she bent over her to wish her good night, with the same unrestrained affection as her own Emmeline did so often, with the only difference, that with the latter it seemed always to spring from the very exuberance of happiness, which could only be thus displayed. With Ellen this night it appeared like some deep quiet feeling, almost of devotion, and as if—though Mrs. Hamilton's sober reason tried to persuade her imagination that it was too much meaning to attach to a mere embrace—she would thus tell her how intensely she felt, not only the indulgence of that evening, but the true kindness, and watchful love which had caused the preceding sorrow. She might have thought, as no doubt many of our readers will, that Ellen was much too young and too childish to contrast her system of treatment with her poor mother's ; that she felt her soothing care in her hours of physical suffering—her indulgent love making no distinction between her and her cousins—still the more keenly and gratefully, from the recollection of her own

mother's constant preference of Edward, and utter neglect of her; and that this contrast so deepened the love she bore her aunt, that it exceeded in intensity even that borne towards her by her own children. Adults will think this all very fanciful, and perhaps interesting, but wholly improbable. Mrs. Hamilton herself would have banished the idea, as too imaginary to be entertained seriously for a moment, as any guide for her conduct. Ellen herself could not have explained or told herself that so she felt and yet, notwithstanding, all we have written *was* there, and was the real prompter of that almost passionate embrace.

"Bless you, my darling!" was Mrs. Hamilton's fond reply, instead of permitting the child to perceive the surprise it excited in herself, and Ellen sunk to sleep, almost more happy than ever in her little life she had felt before.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHILDREN'S BALL.

IF the thought of their promised ball were the first that entered the minds of the young party at Oakwood, as they opened their eyes on New Year's Day, it was not very unnatural. Percy gloried in the anticipation of being master of the ceremonies, and in conducting the whole affair with such inimitable grace and gallantry, that every one should declare it was far superior to any party, old or young, of the season, except Mr. Howard's; that was beyond him, he said, for he could not put Mr. Howard's head on his shoulders. Herbert anticipated the enjoyment of Mary Greville's society, talking to and dancing with her undisturbed, and to hearing the almost universal remark, what a sweet girl she was. Edward did not exactly know what he expected, but he was in such a mood of hilarity and mischief, that the servants all declared Master Fortescue was "*mazed*." To Caroline their ball was almost always (though unconfessedly) the happiest evening in her year. She knew she was handsome—Annie Grahame had told her how very much she would be admired in London, and that if she were not her very dearest friend, she should envy her beauty terribly. She often in secret longed painfully for admiration and homage; and, child as she still was in years, yet at her own house, and as Mr.

Hamilton's eldest daughter, in addition to her real attractions, she always received both in sufficient measure, as to satisfy even herself. She delighted in those evenings when it so chanced that her brothers had young friends with them, making no hesitation in confessing that she very much preferred conversing with boys than with girls, there was so much more variety, more spirit; and though her mother's heart would actually tremble at the fearful ordeal which an introduction to the pleasures of the world would be to such a character, still she would not check the open expression of such sentiments by reproving them as wrong, and not to be encouraged. She knew, that though education might do much, very much, it could not make natural characters all alike; nor, in fact, did she wish it. She did not grieve and complain that, with all her efforts, she could not make Caroline give her as little trouble and anxiety as Emmeline, nor did she imagine that she should see the effect of her earnest prayers and cares all at once, or without constant relapses in the cherished object of her care. She did all she could to counteract a tendency which, situated as she would be when she entered life, must, without some strong high principle, lead to suffering, and, perhaps, to sin—for what is coquetry? But she indulged in no idea of security, never believed that because she had so tried, so striven to sow the good seed, it could not fail to bring forth good fruit. She knew many trials might be in store for her, for how might she hope to pass through life blessed as she was then? It might please her Father in Heaven to try her faith and duty through those she loved so intensely, but

if she failed not in her task, He would bring her joy at last.

To Emmeline the idea of dancing was quite enough to be the acme of enjoyment. The only drawback was, that in the intervals of rest there was to be a little music, and though her mother had excused her at Mr. Howard's, she knew that if anybody expressed a wish to hear her at her own house, play she must; and at those times she was half sorry she had chosen to learn the harp instead of the piano, as Caroline played so well on the latter instrument, nobody would care to hear her; but the harp was rather a novelty, and no little girl who was coming played it, and so she was sadly afraid there was no escape for her, and that was very disagreeable, but she would not think about it till the time came; the dancing to such music as Mr. Hamilton had ordered from Plymouth was joy enough.

Ellen, though rather afraid of so many strangers, could not resist the general contagion of anticipated enjoyment. She did not indeed wake with the thought of the ball, but with the determination to learn the verse of the Psalm her aunt had pointed out, and go and say it to her in her dressing-room before she went down. And as the first verse was very short, she learned two, and repeated them without missing a word, and so as if she quite understood them—that her aunt was very much pleased; and then Ellen could think of and join her brother's and cousins' delight, even though Mrs. Hamilton was obliged to be what she called very cruel, but what Ellen knew was very kind, though it did seem a restraint, and keep her very quiet all day, instead of letting her run about from

room to room, as Emmeline and Edward, and even Percy did, for fear of another headache ; and so well did quietness succeed, that she looked and was unusually well, and so was almost lively by the evening.

Just before dinner, Percy, who had gone to ride, because he said he was sure he should get into some scrape if he did not give a natural vent to his spirits, galloped back in company with a gentleman, whose presence seemed to occasion him still greater excitement.

"Where is my mother ? and is my father at home ?" he asked impatiently, flinging his horse's rein to Robert, desiring him to take every care of the gentleman's horse, as he should not let him leave Oakwood that night ; and then rushing across the hall, threw open the door of their common sitting-room, and exclaimed—

"Mother, give me a vote of thanks and praise for my invincible eloquence !—Here is this anchorite, this monk of the moor, who, when I first encountered him, seemed so doughty a denier of my wishes, actually conquered—led a slave to your feet : reward me by throwing all the fascinations you possibly can in his way, that he may only dream of his cold ride and desolate cottage on Dartmoor to-night."

"Be quiet, madcap !" replied Mrs. Hamilton, rising with very evident pleasure, and coming forward with extended hand ; "your noisy welcome will not permit mine to be heard. This is, indeed, a pleasure, Mr. Morton," she added, addressing the young clergyman with that earnest kindness, which always goes to the heart, "and one that Mr. Hamilton will most highly appreciate—if, as I trust, the chains my son has thrown over you, are not so heavy as to become painful."

"I should rather fear the pain will be in casting them off, Mrs. Hamilton, not in the wearing them," replied Mr. Morton, almost sadly; "it is the knowledge, that mingling as often in your home circle as Mr. Hamilton and my friend Percy desire would wholly unfit me for the endurance of my loneliness, that keeps me so aloof, believe me. Inclination would act a very different part, but there was no resisting such eloquence and such happiness as his to-day," he continued, more gaily.

And Mr. Hamilton and Herbert entering as he spoke, their greeting was quite as warm and eager as Percy's and his mother's, and Mr. Morton gave himself up for the evening at least to enjoyment. His own generous nature had been particularly struck by Percy's manly conduct with regard to his satire, and different as were their characters, a warm friendship from that moment commenced between them. It was impossible to resist Percy's warm-heartedness of word and deed; and that he would sometimes leave his luxurious home, and stay two or three days with Mr. Morton, seeming actually to enjoy the rude cottage and its desolate localities, and spread such a spirit of mirth within and around, that it was no wonder the afflicted young man looked to his society as almost his greatest pleasure, especially as he felt he dared not too often accept Mr. Hamilton's continually proffered invitation. Oakwood was the home which had been his *beau idéal* for long years, but which now seemed wholly unattainable. He felt himself doomed to solitude and suffering, and the struggle for content and cheerfulness was always more painful after he had been with his friends.

When all preparations for the evening were concluded, even the respective toilettes completed, Percy and Emeline found it impossible to resist trying the spring, as they called it, of the oaken floors (whence the carpets had been removed), and amused themselves by waltzing in the largest circle they could make. The beautiful suite of rooms were all thrown open, and perceiving Caroline standing by the piano in an adjoining apartment, Percy called out,—

“Play us a waltz, Caroline, there’s a love; the very liveliest you can find. Tiny and I want to try the boards while we can enjoy them to perfection, that is, when we are the only persons in the room.”

“You must excuse me, Percy,” she replied, somewhat pettishly; “I should think you would have dancing enough in the course of the evening; and what will our friends think if they come and find me playing?”

“Think? why that you are very obliging, which at present you are not,” answered Percy, laughing; “never mind, Emmy; let us try what our united lungs will do.”

“You may if you like, Percy, but really I am not clever enough to dance and sing at the same time—I should have no breath left,” was her as joyous rejoinder.

“Come and dance, Caroline, if you will not play;” exclaimed Edward, who after decorating his button-hole with a sprig of holly, seemed seized with Percy’s dancing mania.

“Do give me an opportunity of practising the graces before I am called upon to display them.”

“My love of dancing is not so great as to attempt it without music, so practise by yourself, Edward,” was Caroline’s quick reply.

"Without spectators you mean, Lina," observed her brother, very drily; and as Emmeline begged him not to tease her, he asked—

"What has put her in this ill-humour, Emmy?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly; but if you let her alone, she will soon recover it."

"Well, to please you, I will; for you look so pretty to night, I cannot resist you."

"Take care, Percy, if you try to turn my head with such speeches, I shall go to Edward and punish you by not waltzing with you," said his little sister, shaking her head at him with a comic species of reproach.

"That's right, Emmy; do not take flattery even from a brother," said her father, coming forward with a smile; "but will you not tire yourself by dancing already?"

"Oh no, Papa; I feel as if I could dance all night without stopping."

"Not with me, Emmeline," rejoined Percy, shrugging his shoulders with horror at the idea; "I should cry you mercy, before one half the time had elapsed."

"But if you are not to be tired, will you not spoil your dress, and disorder all these flowing curls," continued Mr. Hamilton, "and surely that will be a great misfortune."

"Indeed, it will not, Papa; Percy has surely too much regard for me, to wilfully hurt my frock, and if my hair should be so troublesome as to get out of order Fanny will rearrange it in a few minutes."

"If you wish to cause alarm on that score, my dear father," said Percy, with marked emphasis, "you must go to Caroline not to Emmeline. Thank goodness, I have one sister above such petty misfortunes."

"Are you not too hard upon Caroline, Percy?"

"Yes, Papa, he is, indeed; do not mind what he says," answered Emmeline, very eagerly; but Percy said impetuously—

"I am not, Emmeline. I would lay any wager that something has gone wrong with her dressing to-night, and so made her pettish. Her frock is not smart enough, or she does not wear the ornaments she wished, or some such thing."

Caroline had fortunately quitted the music-room, or this speech would not have tended to restore her serenity; but before Mr. Hamilton could reply, Edward, who had been to seek Ellen, burst into the room, exclaiming—

"Now, Percy, we may have a proper waltz; Aunt Emmeline says we may have just one, before any one comes, and here she is to play for us, and Ellen for my partner," and they enjoyed it in earnest. Mr. Hamilton watched them for a few minutes, and then went to seek his elder girl.

She was alone in a little room prepared for refreshments tastefully arranging some beautiful flowers in a bouquet. She looked up as he entered, and so smiled that her fond father thought Percy must be wrong, for there certainly seemed no trace of ill-temper.

"Why are you not with your brothers and sister in the drawing-room, my dear? and why did you just now refuse your brother such a trifling favour as playing a waltz?" he asked, but so kindly, that Caroline, though she blushed deeply, instantly replied—

"Because, Papa, my temper was not quite restored; I went into the music-room to try Mamma's remedy of solitude for a few minutes, but Percy spoke to me before I had succeeded. I know I answered him pettishly, but

indeed, Papa," she added, looking up earnestly in his face, "indeed, he is very provoking sometimes."

"I know he is, my love; he does not always know how to time his jokes, or to make sufficient allowance for dispositions not exactly like his own; but tell me, what first occasioned temper so to fail that solitude was necessary."

Caroline's blush became still deeper, and she turned away her head, saying, very hesitatingly—

"For such a very, *very* silly reason, Papa, that I do not like to tell you."

"Nay, my dear, do not fear that I shall either laugh at or reproach you. If you feel yourself how very silly it was, I am not afraid of its gaining too great ascendancy, even if you fail again."

"It was only—only—that I was not quite satisfied with the dress Mamma desired me to wear to-night, Papa; that was all, indeed."

"You wished, perhaps, to wear a smarter one, my love," replied her father, kissing her glowing cheek so affectionately, that the pain of her confession was instantly soothed; "but, indeed, I think Mamma has shown a much better taste. It requires more care than you are yet perhaps aware of, to dress so exactly according to our age and station as to do ourselves justice, and yet excite no unpleasant feelings in those of a lower, and no contempt in those of a higher, grade. Many of our friends who are coming to-night could not afford to dress their children as we might ours, and do you not think it would be both inhospitable and unkind, by being over-dressed, to excite any unpleasant feeling of inferiority in their minds, when actually none exists?

for difference of fortune alone can never constitute inferiority. I am wizard enough to guess that was Mamma's reason for your being attired so simply and yet so prettily to-night, and equally wizard enough to guess your reason for wishing to be smarter—shall I tell it you?" he added, playfully. "Because you fancy Miss Grahame will be attired in such a very fashionable London costume, that yours will appear so very plain and so childish. I see by that conscious smile, I have guessed correctly; but, indeed, I would not exchange my dear ingenuous Caroline, even were she attired in the cottager's stuff frock, for Annie Grahame, did she bring worlds as her dowry. And as you like ornaments, wear this," he added, tastefully twining a superb sprig of scarlet geranium in the rich dark hair that shaded Caroline's noble brow; "and if Mamma inquires, tell her your father placed it there, as a token of his approbation, for temper conquered and truth unhesitatingly spoken—spite of pain."

Caroline's brilliant eye sparkled with a more delightful sense of pleasure than any triumph of dress could have bestowed, and in answer to her father's inquiry, for whom she had arranged such a beautiful bouquet, she said—

"It is for Mamma, dear Papa—Emmeline is always before me; but I think the idea of to-night's enjoyment has so bewildered her, that she has forgotten it, so I may just have time to present it before any one comes," and she hastened with her father to the drawing-room, where she found Mrs. Greville and her two children (for Alfred was at home for a few months), in addition to Mr. Morton and their own family group; and the

young clergyman could not but admire the natural grace with which Caroline, after warmly welcoming her guests, presented her flowers to her mother. It was a very little thing, but the joys and griefs of home are almost all made up of little things, and Mrs. Hamilton was pleased, not from the attention alone, but that it proved, trifling as it was, that the annoyance and discontent which her command had occasioned in her child had left no unkind feeling behind them, and the manner with which she received it made Caroline very happy, for she had inwardly feared her ill-temper not only deserved, but had excited, her mother's displeasure.

Emmeline's look of disappointment and self-reproach at her own unusual forgetfulness was so irresistibly comic, that Percy and Edward burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, which the former only checked to ask Caroline where she had been, and what she had done, to produce such an extraordinary change for the better in her appearance in so short a time.

"Oh, you have no right to my secrets, Percy," was her perfectly good-humoured reply; "I do not think I shall answer you, except by having the charity to refer you to Papa, who has produced the change."

"By means of this pretty flower then, I imagine," said Mrs. Hamilton; "its power I do not pretend to know, but the taste with which it is placed might vie with that of the most fashionable artiste of the metropolis. Mrs. Greville, do unite with me in congratulating Mr. Hamilton on his new accomplishment."

The rapid succession of arrivals prevented any further remark, and very speedily the inspiring sound of the beautiful music, which was stationed in a sort of ante-

chamber between the drawing-room and ball-room, removed anything like stiffness or reserve which the younger guests might have at first experienced amongst themselves. After two or three quadrilles, the spirit of enjoyment seemed to reign alone, not only amongst the dancers themselves, but even those who sat out and talked, either from preference or because the sets were full. Percy, his brother, and cousin were so active, so universal in their attention and politeness, that all had the same measure of enjoyment; there was no sitting down four or five times consecutively for any one, and therefore neither weariness nor dissatisfaction. Where there is a great desire in the givers of a party to make every one as happy as themselves and thoroughly to enjoy it, they seldom fail to succeed. And there was such a variety of amusements in the various rooms that were thrown open, suitable for all ages—from the mammas and papas to the youngest child, that it was scarcely possible to feel anything but pleasure. Very many sets had been formed and danced before the Grahame family appeared, and as Caroline glanced at her friend and even her little sister, it required a very vivid recollection of her father's words to prevent a feeling of false shame, while Annie looked at Emmeline and even her favorite Caroline for a few minutes with almost contempt.

"People talk so very much of Mrs. Hamilton's taste," she thought, "but she can have none in dress, that's certain—why no one could distinguish her daughters from the poorest gentleman's here!—But no one can mistake my rank. Thank goodness, there is not a dress like mine—how it will be envied!"

If looks were evidence of envy, Annie had them to her heart's content, but how would she have been mortified, could she have read the secret meaning of those looks, the contrast drawn between the manners and appearance of Lady Helen's daughters and those of the Honorable Mrs. Hamilton. Lady Helen herself, indeed, when she saw Caroline and Emmeline, was quite provoked that she had been so weak as to permit, and even encourage Annie, to select her own and her sister's costume.

"You are so late," said Mrs. Hamilton, as she came forward to greet them, "that I almost gave you up, fearing I don't exactly know what. I do hope nothing unpleasant has occasioned it."

"Oh, no," was Mr. Grahame's reply, and it was almost bitter; "only Miss Grahame was so dreadfully afraid of being unfashionably early, that her mother did not choose to come before—indeed, my patience and my little Lilla's was so exhausted, that we thought of leaving Cecil to be their beau, and coming alone an hour ago." Lady Helen's look of entreaty at Mrs. Hamilton was answered by her saying directly—

"I suppose Annie was thinking of her London parties, and forgot how completely gothic we are as to hours and everything else in Devonshire. But you must try and forget such superior pleasures to-night, my dear girl," she added, jestingly, though the young lady felt it rather uncomfortably as earnest, "or I fear you will find but little amusement." Alfred Greville at that moment came to claim Annie as his partner, and she gladly joined him, for though Mrs. Hamilton had "certainly no taste in dress," she never felt quite at her ease

in her presence. Cecil and Lilla were soon provided with little partners, and dancing with much more real delight than their sister.

It was scarcely possible for any one, much less a parent, to look at Caroline that night without admiration. She was so animated, so graceful, so pleasing, and as such completely the centre of attraction (and really without any effort on her part) to all the gentlemen, young or old in the room. The lads congregated round her, and it was rather a difficult task to keep clear of offence, when so very many more entreated her to dance than the length of the evening permitted; but she managed to talk to all, and yet not to neglect any of her own sex, for she always refused to dance, if she fancied her being in the quadrille prevented any couple who had not danced so much, and at those times contrived to conciliate five or six instead of only one. Emmeline took charge of the younger children, often refusing to dance with older boys, who would have made her much pleasanter partners, that she might join the little quadrille, and set them all right.

"I am really glad to see Ellen amongst us to-night, and seeming truly to enjoy herself," said Mrs. Greville, addressing Mrs. Hamilton, who was standing rather apart at the moment, watching Caroline with such mingled feelings of pride and dread, that she was quite glad when her friend's voice disturbed her train of thought. "She looked so ill in church yesterday, that I half feared we should not see her. I told her I was quite grieved that she was too unwell to be at Mr. Howard's last Friday, and"—

"What did she say?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, anxiously.

"That it was not illness which prevented her; but she looked so confused and pained that I changed the subject directly, and the smile soon came back."

"You touched on a very painful theme," replied Mrs. Hamilton, with real relief; "Ellen and I were not quite as good friends as we usually are last week, and my poor little girl felt my severity more than I imagined or meant. I gave her to your dear Mary's especial care to-night, for she is so timid, that, left quite to herself, I was afraid it would be more pain than pleasure. Mary has taken my hint most admirably, for Ellen seems quite happy."

"It would be rather hard, if your little niece's were the only sad face in this scene of enjoyment; surely, if ever there were happiness without alloy, it is here."

"If you think so, Mrs. Greville, you will agree with my friend Morton, who has just been half poetising, half philosophising on this scene," said Mr. Hamilton, joining them, with the young clergyman leaning on his arm. "He says there is something singularly interesting in watching the countenances and movements of children, and in tracing the dawnings of respective characters."

"You are not one of those, then, who think childhood a mere negative species of existence," rejoined Mrs. Greville.

"Indeed, I do not; there is much more pleasure to me in watching such a scene, than a similar one of adults. It is full of that kind of poetry which, from the beauty and freshness of the present, creates a future of happiness or sorrow, good or evil, as something in

each countenance seems dimly to foretel. How many will be the longing thoughts thrown back in after years upon to-night!"

"Do you think then childhood the happiest season of life?"

He answered in the affirmative, but Mr. Hamilton shook his head.

"I differ from you, my good friend," he said. "Childhood feels its griefs as bitterly as those of maturer years. We are apt to think it was all joy in the retrospect, perhaps because it has not the anxiety and cares of riper years, but sorrow itself is felt as keenly. From reason not being perfectly formed, the difficulty to control self-will, to acquiesce in the to them incomprehensible wishes of parents or guardians, the restraint they are often compelled to use, must be all trials even to well-regulated children, and to those subject to the caprices of weakness, indolence, neglect, indulgence at one time, and tyranny at another, feelings disbelieved in, and therefore never studied or soothed—the little heart thrown back upon itself,—Morton, believe me, these are trials as full of suffering, and as hard to be endured, as those which belong to manhood."

"You may be right," replied Morton; "but do you not think there is an elasticity in childhood which flings off sorrow, and can realize happiness sooner than older years?"

"Undoubtedly, and most happy is it that they are so constituted, else what would become of them? their susceptibilities for either joy or sorrow are equally quick. If the former did not balance the latter, how would their tender frames and quick affections bear their bur-

den? The idea that childhood is in itself the happiest season in life is so far mischievous, that it prevents the necessary care and watchfulness, which alone can make it so. But we must not philosophise any more, for it has made us all grave. I see my wife is addressing Miss Grahame, and I think it is for music. Come, Morton, take Mrs. Greville to the music-room, and woo melody instead of poetry for the next half hour. Miss Grahame promises to be a very fair musician, so you will be charmed."

They adjourned to the music-room, where Percy had already gallantly conducted Annie, and several of the guests, young and old, seconded the move: Annie Grahame really played remarkably well, so far as execution and brilliancy were concerned, and Mrs. Hamilton was delighted at the expression of Grahame's face as he listened to his child and the applause she excited. "Why will he not try to win his home-affections," she thought, "when he is so formed to enjoy them? and why, why has Helen so indolently, so foolishly cast away her happiness?" was the thought that followed at the contrast which Lady Helen's face presented to her husband's; she knew Annie played well, she had heard it from very superior judges, and how could it concern her what the present company thought?

A very pretty vocal duet from the two sisters followed, and soon afterwards Caroline approached the music-stand, near which Percy and Mr. Morton were talking, and Percy, with his usual love of provoking, exclaimed—

"You surely are not going to play after Miss Grahame, Caroline. If your powers deserted you a few hours ago, and prevented the execution of a waltz, they would cer-

tainly do you a charity in deserting you completely now."

Caroline's cheek burned, but she answered, with spirit—

"Mamma desired me to oblige my friends, Percy; and she would not do so, if she thought I should disgrace myself or her."

"Do not heed your brother, Miss Hamilton," interposed Mr. Morton, taking the music from her, and offering her his arm to lead her to the piano. "I have had the pleasure of hearing you often, and those who cannot find an equal, if not superior, charm in your playing to Miss Grahame's, do not deserve to listen."

"Nay, you must be flattering, Mr. Morton; think of Annie's advantages."

"Indeed, my dear Miss Hamilton, yours exceed hers; no master's heart is in his pupil's progress, as a mother's in her child's, even should she not teach, but merely superintend."

Caroline was seated at the instrument as he spoke, and there was something in his few words touching a right chord; for as she began to play she certainly thought more of her mother than any one else; and determined, if possible, that others should think with Mr. Morton, forgetting at the moment that very few, except their own immediate circle, knew whose pupil she was, not imagining that the mistress of Oakwood and its large possessions could have time or inclination for any part of the education of her daughters. Morton was certainly right as to the amount of admiration, equalling, if not surpassing, that bestowed on Miss Grahame; there was a soul, a depth of expression and feeling, in

Caroline's far simpler piece, that won its way to the heart at once, and if it did not surprise as much, it pleased more, and excited an earnest wish to listen to her again.

"Does not your younger daughter play?" inquired a lady, who had been much attracted with Emmeline.

"Very little, compared with her sister," replied Mrs. Hamilton; "she is not nearly so fond of it, and therefore does not devote so much time to its acquirement just yet."

"Do you think it right to permit children to follow their own inclinations with regard to their education?" asked another rather stern-looking lady, with much surprise.

"Only with regard to their accomplishments; my Emmeline is as fond of drawing as Caroline is of music, and therefore I indulge her by permitting her to give more time to the one, than to the other."

"But do you think natural taste can be traced so early? that it can be distinguished from idleness or perverseness?"

"Indeed, I do," replied Mrs. Hamilton, earnestly. "If a child be allowed leisure to choose its own pursuits, and not always confined to the routine of a schoolroom, natural taste for some employment in preference to another will I think always display itself. Not that I would depend entirely on that, because I think it right and useful to cultivate a taste for all the fine arts, only giving more time to that which is the favorite. My niece has shown no decided taste for any particular pursuit yet; but I do not neglect the cultivation of accomplishment on that account; if in a few years a preference

manifests itself, it will be quite time enough to work hard at that particular branch."

"Is that pretty little harp used by either of your daughters?" inquired the first speaker. "It looks very much as if it were the especial property of my engaging little friend."

"Your guess is correct," replied Mrs. Hamilton, smiling. "Emmeline was quite sure she should hate music, if she must learn the great ugly piano. If she might only have a harp, she would do all she could to learn, and she really has."

"And may we not hear her?"

"When the room is not quite so full; she has not half her sister's confidence, and so large an audience would frighten away all her little powers; but I will promise you a very sweet song instead," she added, as Herbert approached, and eagerly whispered some request. "That is, if my persuasions can prevail on my young friend; Mrs. Greville, must I ask your influence, or will mine be enough?"

"What, with Mary? I rather think, your request in this case will be of more weight than mine;" and a few minutes afterwards Mrs. Hamilton led the blushing, timid girl in triumph to the piano. Her voice, which was peculiarly sweet and thrilling, though not strong, trembled audibly as she commenced; but Herbert was turning over the leaves of her music, his mother was standing close beside her, and after the first few bars her enthusiastic spirit forgot the presence of all, save those she loved, and the spirit of her song.

Mrs. Hamilton never listened to and looked at her at such moments without a trembling foreboding she vainly

struggled to overcome. There was something in those deep blue earnest eyes, the hectic colour that with the least exertion rose to her cheek, the transparency of complexion, the warm and elevated spirit, the almost angel temper and endurance in her peculiarly tried lot, that scarcely seemed of earth ; and never was that sad foreboding stronger than at that moment, as she looked round the crowd of young and happy faces, and none seemed to express the same as Mary's. She could scarcely command her voice and smile sufficiently to warmly thank her young favorite as she ceased ; but Mary was more than satisfied by the fond pressure of her hand.

This little interruption to the actual business of the evening only increased the zest and enjoyment, when dancing recommenced. Even the call to supper was obeyed with reluctance, and speedily accomplished, that they might return the sooner to the ball-room. The hours had worn away it seemed on gossamer-wings, and as each happy child felt assured that the delight could not last much longer, the longing to dance to the very last moment seemed to increase. Emmeline's excitable spirit had thrown off all alloy, for it was quite impossible any one would think of asking her to play now ; she had arranged all the remaining couples—for the room had begun very much to thin—for the favorite Haymaker's country dance, * and accepting Edward as her own partner, and being unanimously desired to take the top, led off her young friends with such spirit and grace, and so

* A country dance, the author believes peculiar to Devonshire, for she has never seen it danced elsewhere.

little semblance of fatigue, that it certainly appeared as if she would verify her own words, and dance all night.

Miss Grahame had declared it was much too great a romp, and declined joining it. Caroline who would have enjoyed it, out of more politeness to her friend than inclination, sat down with her, and a cheerful group of some of the older lads, and one or two young ladies joined them. Herbert and Mary, finding the quadrille for which they were engaged, changed to a dance for which, though they had quite the spirit, they had not the physical strength, enjoyed a quiet chat instead, and Ellen seated herself by her favorite Mary, declining, from fatigue, Alfred Greville's entreaty that she would second Emmeline.

"I declare I could dance myself with that merry group," exclaimed Mr. Grahame, after watching them some time, and all his austerity banished by the kindly spirit of the evening. "Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Greville, do one of you take pity on me, and indulge my fancy."

Both ladies laughingly begged to be excused, offering, however, to introduce him to a partner.

"No; it must be one of you or none at all. That little sylph of yours, Mrs. Hamilton, seems inclined to dance for you and herself too. What a pretty couple she and that handsome cousin of hers make! And there goes my little Lilla—I do hope I may have one really happy child. What, tired, Percy—compelled to give up—absolutely exhausted?"

"Indeed I am," answered Percy, who had waltzed his partner very cleverly out of the line, and after giving her a seat, threw himself on a large ottoman.

"Mother, if you do not put a stop to Emmeline's

proceedings, her strength will entirely fail, and down she and Edward will go, and the rest follow just like a pack of cards. Do, pray, prevent such a catastrophe, for I assure you it is not in the least unlikely."

The gravity with which he spoke caused a general laugh; but Mrs. Hamilton, feeling by the length of time the fatiguing dance had lasted, there was really some truth in his words, desired the musicians to stop; causing an exclamation of regret and disappointment from many youthful lips, and Emmeline and Edward ran up to her, to entreat that they might go on a little longer. Mrs. Hamilton, however, refused; and Edward yielded directly, but Emmeline was so much excited, that obedience was most unusually difficult; and when her mother desired her to sit down quietly for ten minutes, and then come to the music-room, as Mrs. Allan most particularly wished to hear her play before she left, she answered, with more petulance than she was at all aware of,—

"I am sure I cannot play a note now—it will be no use trying."

"Emmeline!" exclaimed her mother, adding, gravely, "I am afraid you have danced too much, instead of not enough."

The tone, still more than the words, was enough; poor Emmeline was just in that mood when tears are quite as near as smiles; her own petulance seemed to reproach her too, and she suddenly burst into tears. Many exclamations of sympathy and condolence burst from her mother's friends:—"Poor child!" "She has over-tired herself!" "We cannot expect her to play now!"—but Mrs. Greville saying, with a smile, that her

little friend's tears were always the very lightest April showers, successfully turned the attention of many from her; while Mrs. Hamilton, taking her hand from her face, merely said, in a low voice—

“Do not make me more ashamed of you, Emmeline. What would Papa think if he were to see you now?” Her little girl's only answer was to bury her face still more closely in her mother's dress, very much as if she would like to hide herself entirely; but on Mrs. Allan saying, very kindly—

“Do not distress yourself, my dear. I would not have asked to hear you play, if I had thought you would dislike it so much. I dare say you are very tired, and so think you will not succeed.”

She raised her head directly, shook back the fair ringlets that had fallen over her face, and though the tears were still on her cheeks and filling her eyes, she said, with a blending of childish shyness and yet courageous truth, impossible to be described :

“No, Ma'am, I am not too tired to play—I did not cry from fatigue, but because I was angry with Mamma for not letting me dance any more, and angry with myself for answering her so pettishly; and because—because—I thought she was displeased, and that I deserved it.”

“Then come and redeem your character,” was Mrs. Hamilton's only notice of a reply that actually made her heart throb with thankfulness, that her lessons of truth were so fully understood and practised by one naturally so gentle and timid as her Emmeline; while Mrs. Allan knew not what to answer, from a feeling of involuntary respect. It would have been so easy to

escape a disagreeable task by tacitly allowing that she was too tired to play, and what careful training must it have been to have so taught truth.

"Mrs. Allan would not ask you before, because she knew you did not like to play while the room was so very full; therefore, ought you not to do your very best to oblige her?"

Emmeline looked timidly up in her mother's face, to be quite sure that her displeasure had subsided, as her words seemed to denote; and quite satisfied, her tears were all checked, and taking Mrs. Allan's offered hand, she went directly to the music-room.

Mrs. Hamilton lingered to desire Herbert (who had come up to know the cause of his sister's sudden tears) to form the last quadrille, and reserve a place, if he possibly could, for Emmeline, as they would not begin till she had done. Her little girl was playing as she rejoined her, and it really was a pretty picture, her fairy figure with her tiny harp, and her sweet face seeming to express the real feeling with which she played. There was no execution in the simple Highland air, but her vivid imagination lent it a meaning, and so, when fairly playing, she did not mind it. Mrs. Allan had lost a little girl just at Emmeline's age, who had also played the harp, and there was something in her caress and thanks after she had done that made Emmeline stand quietly at her side, without heeding the praises that were lavished round her. Herbert at that moment appeared with one of the young Allans.

"Come, Emmy, we are only waiting for you; Mr. Allan says you have not favoured him to-night, and he hopes you will now."

"Pray do," added Mrs. Allan, as her son gaily pleaded his own cause; Emmeline only waited to read her mother's consent in her eyes, for she thought that she ought not to dance any more; and in another minute the joyous music had resounded, and she was dancing and chatting as gaily and happily as if there had been no interruption to her joy.

"And you will leave all these delights to imprison yourself in a man-of-war?" asked Mr. Grahame, jestingly of Edward, while waiting for his wife and daughters, who were the last departures (much to Annie's horror, for it was so unfashionable to be quite the last), to be cloaked and shawled.

"Imprison!" was his very indignant reply, "and on the wide free glorious ocean! flying on the wings of the wind wherever we please, and compelling the flag of every land to acknowledge ours! No, Mr. Grahame; you landmen don't know what liberty is, if you talk of imprisonment in a ship! We take our home wherever we go, which you landmen cannot do, though you do so poetise on the maternal properties of Old Mother Earth."

"Only hear him, Hamilton," exclaimed Grahame, laughing heartily; "any one would think he had been a sailor all his little life. You talk boldly now, my boy, but you may change your tone when you have once tried the cockpit."

"I do not think I shall," answered Edward, earnestly; "I know there are many hardships, and I dare say I shall find them more disagreeable than I can possibly imagine; but I shall get used to them; it is so cowardly to care for hardships."

"And it is no grief to give up all the pleasures of land?"

"I exchange them for others more delightful still."

"And the sea is to be your sister, uncle, aunt, and cousins—altogether?"

"Yes, all," replied Edward, laughing; adding, as he put his arm affectionately round Ellen, "my sister has so many kind friends that she will be able to spare me till I am old enough to do all a brother ought."

"You are a good fellow, Edward, and I see I must not talk of parting, if I would preserve this evening's pleasure unalloyed," Grahame said, as he laid his hand kindly on Ellen's head, and then turned to obey the summons of his wife.

The young party no doubt felt that it would be infinitely more agreeable to sit up all night and talk of the only too quickly concluded enjoyment, than to retire to their respective pillows; but the habits of Oakwood were somewhat too well regulated for such dissipation, though, no doubt, their *dream-land* that night, was peopled with the pleasant shadows of reality, and, according to their respective sources of enjoyment, brought back their evening's happiness again and again.

CHAPTER XII.

EFFECTS OF PLEASURE.—THE YOUNG MIDSHIPMAN.—
ILL-TEMPER, ITS ORIGIN AND CONSEQUENCES.

THE return to the quiet routine of work and less exciting recreation, after the Christmas pleasures, was of course a trial to all our young friends. Not so much to the boys as to their sisters; Percy's elastic spirits found pleasure in everything, being somewhat too old to care for his studies, or feel them now as a restraint. Herbert only exchanged one kind of happiness for another. Edward looked to every month that passed, as bringing nearer the attainment of his wishes; and he was so fond of Mr. Howard, and so quick at learning, and such a favourite with all his schoolfellows, that he did not care at all when the time of work came again. Ellen and Emmeline both found it very difficult to like their lessons again; especially the latter, who felt as if work and regularity were most particularly disagreeable things, and sometimes almost was in despair as to her ever enjoying them again; but she tried very hard to overcome indolence and never give way to petulance, and succeeded, so as to win her the delight of both her parents' approbation. Indulgence always made her feel as if no effort on her part was too great to prove how much she felt it; and when any one, old or young, experience this sort of

feeling, they need never be afraid but that they will succeed in their efforts, painful and hard as at first they may seem. It was not so difficult for Ellen as for Emmeline, because she was less able to realize such an intensity of pleasure. She seemed safer when regularly employed, and besides, to work hard at her respective studies was one of the very few things she could do to prove how much she loved her aunt; and accustomed from such early childhood to conquer inclination, and, in fact, never to fancy pleasure and indulgence were her due, there was happiness enough for her even in their more regular life: but to Caroline the change was actually unbearable. While admiration and praise only incited Emmeline to greater exertions, they caused Caroline completely to relax in hers, and to give, in consequence, as much trouble and annoyance as she had received pleasure. The perseverance in her various studies, especially in music, the unceasing control over her temper, which *before* the holidays she had so striven for, had now entirely given way. It was much less trouble for her to learn than Emmeline, therefore her studies with Miss Harcourt were generally well performed; but the admiration she had excited made her long for more, and believe herself a person deserving much more consideration and respect than she received from her own family. These thoughts persisted in, of course produced and retained ill-temper; which, as there was no longer any fear of her being debarred by its indulgence from any pleasure, she made no attempt to overcome. The praise bestowed on her music made her fancy herself a much greater proficient than she really was, and though her love of music was great, her love of praise was greater; and so

she not only relaxed in her practice, but inwardly murmured at the very little praise she received from her mother.

"How can you give Mamma so much trouble, Caroline, when you know you can do so much better?" Herbert exclaimed, one day, when an attack of weakness, to which he was liable, had confined him to a sofa.

Mrs. Hamilton, after giving her usual hour's lesson, in which Caroline had chosen to do nothing, had left her in very evident displeasure, and even Herbert was roused to most unusual indignation.

"What is the use of practising day after day?" was her angry reply; "I am sure I should play just as well if I practised less."

"You did not think so a month ago, Caroline."

"No, because then, I had something to practise for."

"And have you nothing now?—Is Mamma's approbation nothing?—Is the pleasure you give all of us, by your talent for music, nothing?—Oh, Caroline, why will you throw away so much real gratification, for the vain desire of universal admiration?"

"There surely can be no harm, Herbert, in wishing to be universally loved and admired."

"There is, when it makes you discontented and unhappy, and blind to the love and admiration of your home. What is the praise of strangers worth, compared to that of those who love you best?"

"There is not much chance of my receiving either at present," was the cold reply.

"Because you will not try for the one most easily and happily obtained; and even without thinking of praise, how can you be so ungrateful, as to repay all

Mamma's care and trouble by the indolence, coldness, and almost insolence, you have shown to-day? How few mothers of her rank would—"

"You may spare your sermon, Herbert; for at this moment I am not disposed either to listen to or profit by it," interrupted Caroline, and she left the room in anger. A faint flush rose to the pale cheek of her brother, but he quickly conquered the natural irritation, and sought his mother, by every fond attention on his part, to remove the pain of Caroline's conduct.

This continued for about a fortnight, at the end of which time, Caroline suddenly resumed her music with assiduity, and there were no more ebullitions of ill-temper. Herbert hoped his expostulations were taking effect; Mrs. Hamilton trusted that her child was becoming sensible of her past folly, and trying to conquer it, and banish its memory herself: both, however, were mistaken. Annie Grahame had imparted to her friend, in strict confidence, that her mother intended giving a grand ball about the end of February, and meant to entreat Mrs. Hamilton, as a personal favour, to let Caroline be present. Caroline little knew the very slight foundation Annie had for this assertion. Lady Helen had merely said, *perhaps* she would ask; and this was only said, because she was too indolent and weak to say "No" at once. Not that she had any unkind feeling towards Caroline, but simply because she was perfectly certain Mrs. Hamilton would not consent, and to persuade as earnestly as Annie wished was really too much trouble.

Caroline's wishes in this instance triumphed over her better judgment, for had she allowed herself to think soberly, she ought to have known her mother's prin-

ciples of action sufficiently, not to entertain the slightest hope of going.

The invitations (three weeks' notice) for her parents and brothers came. In them she did not expect to be included, but when above a week passed, and still not a word was said, disappointment took the place of hope, and it was only the still lingering belief that she might go, even at the last moment, that prevented the return of ill-temper.

Now Lady Helen really had asked, though she did not persuade; and Mrs. Hamilton thanked her, but, as she expected, decidedly refused. "Caroline was much too young," she said, "for such a party. Did she know anything about being asked?" Lady Helen said with truth, that she had not mentioned the subject to her, and had desired Annie to be equally silent.

Mrs. Hamilton quite forgot that Miss Grahame was not famous for obedience, and, relying on her friend's assurance, determined on not saying anything to Caroline about it; wishing to spare her the pain which she knew her refusal would inflict. As it happened, it would have been better if she had spoken. The weather had prevented Caroline from seeing Annie, but she was quite sure she would not deceive her; and her proud heart rebelled against her mother, not only for refusing Lady Helen's request, but for treating her so much like a child, as to hide that refusal from her. Under the influence of such thoughts, of course her temper became more and more difficult to control, and as a natural consequence, anger and irritation against her mother, and self-reproach for the indulgence of such feelings increased, till she became actually miserable.

It happened that about this time Miss Harcourt left Oakwood for a week, on a visit to an invalid friend at Dartmouth. Mrs. Hamilton had given her full liberty, promising that her pupils should lose nothing by her absence. She left on the Saturday, and the Thursday was Lady Helen's ball. On the Monday, Mr. Hamilton detained Edward as he was leaving the library, after morning prayers, and told him that he had received a letter, which he thought might chance to interest him. Ten minutes afterwards, Edward rushed into the breakfast-room, in a state of such joyous excitement that he could scarcely speak.

"Wish me five, ten, twenty thousand joys!" he exclaimed, springing from chair to chair, as if velocity of movement should bring back speech. "In one month the Prince William sails, and I am to meet her at Portsmouth, and be a sailor, a real sailor; and to-morrow fortnight Uncle says we are to start for London, and have ten days there to see all the fine sights, and then go to Portsmouth, and see all that is to be seen there, and then—and then—"

"Take care you do not lose your wits before you leave Oakwood," interposed Percy, laughing heartily. "I should not at all wonder, before you go, that you will be fancying the river Dart the Atlantic, and set sail in a basket, touch at all the islets you may pass, imagining them various cities, and finally land at Dartmouth, believing it Halifax, your destined port,—that will be the end of your sailorship, Edward, depend upon it."

"I rather think I should stand a chance of being ducked into my sober senses again, Percy, unless wicker be waterproof, which I never heard it was."

"But I have, though," eagerly interrupted Emmeline; "the Scots and Picts invaded England in wicker boats, and to have held so many men, they must have been strong, and waterproof too. So you see, Percy's basket is only an ancient boat, Edward. You are much better off than you thought you were."

"Give me Alfred's wooden walls instead, Emmy; your Picts and Scots were very little better than savages,—Alfred is my man; he deserves to be called great, if it were only for forming the first English navy. But neither my Aunt nor Ellen have wished me joy. I think I shall be offended."

Mrs. Hamilton could not speak at the first moment, for the joy, the animation of her nephew so recalled the day when her own much-loved brother, her darling Charles, had rushed into her room, to tell her all his glee, for no one ever listened to and shared in his joys and troubles as she did. He was then scarcely older than Edward, as full of hope and joy and buoyancy,—where was he? Would his fate be that of the bright beautiful boy before her? and as Edward threw his arms round her neck, and kissed her again and again, telling her he could not be quite sure it was not all a dream, unless she wished him joy too, it was the utmost effort to prevent the fast gathering tears, and so command her voice, that he should not hear it tremble. Poor Ellen looked and felt bewildered. She had always tried to realize that Edward, to be a sailor, must leave her; and in fact, aware that his summons would soon come, her aunt and uncle had often alluded to his departure before her, but still she had never thought it near; and now the news was so sudden, and Edward was so wild with joy, she

fancied she ought to rejoice too, but she could not ; and Percy was obliged to ask her merrily, what ailed her, and if she could not trust to his being a much more worthy brother than such a water-rat, who had no business whatever on land ? before she could take her place at the breakfast-table and try to smile. But her eyes would rest on Edward even then, and she felt as if there were something across her throat, and she could not swallow the nice roll which Herbert had so kindly buttered and cut, and so quietly placed in her plate ; and when Edward said something very funny, as he was in the habit of doing, and made them all laugh, she tried to laugh too, but instead of a laugh it was a sob that startled herself, for she was quite sure she did not mean to be so foolish ; but instead of being reproved, as she was afraid she should be, she felt her aunt's arm thrown gently round her, till she could hide her face on her shoulder, and cry quite quietly for a few minutes, for they went on talking and laughing round the breakfast-table, and nobody took any notice of her, which she was quite glad of, for she could not bear Edward to think she was unhappy when he was so pleased. And after breakfast, though he was in such a desperate hurry to tell Mr. Howard the good news, that when he did set off, he left even Percy far behind him, he found time to give her a hearty kiss, and to tell her that he loved her very much, though he could not help being so glad he was going to sea, and that he was quite proud of her, because though he knew she was very sorry he was going, she did not cry and make a fuss as some selfish people would, and then she really did smile.

“ It is Monday morning, my dears, and I find Ellis

and Morris require my attention for a longer time than I expected," Mrs. Hamilton said, as she entered the school-room, and found the three girls preparing their books, "so I must set you all to work, and see how well you can get on without me till eleven, when I will rejoin you. I shall order the carriage at half-past twelve, and if all I require is completed, we will pay your favorite old ruin a visit, Emmy; the morning is so lovely, that I think we may venture to take our sketch-books, and see what other part of Berry Pomeroy we can take pencil-possession of."

Such an anticipation was quite enough for Emmeline. Her dance about the room as only checked by the idea that her lessons would never be ready, nor her exercises and sums done, unless she sat quietly down, and so, with a great effort, she gave all her attention to her various tasks, and mastered them even before her mother returned. Ellen, though she tried quite as much, was not so successful. The Prince William would sail in miniature on her slate, over all her figures. The recollection of the awful storm they had encountered on their voyage to England would return so vividly, that the very room seemed to heave. And then—but she could not make out why she should think about that then,—her mother's death-bed came before her, and her promise, and it seemed harder still to part with Edward, from a vague dread that came over her, but still she tried to attend to what she had to do, and congratulated herself on its completion before her aunt appeared.

Caroline alone was determined not to work. Because she had not made herself miserable enough already, the most unfounded jealousy entered her head, from seeing

her mother's caressing kindness towards Ellen at breakfast; why was not her manner as kind to her? she was quite as unhappy, and her mother must see it, but she took no notice of her; only of Ellen. She might be cross sometimes, but she never told stories or tried to hide her faults, and it was very hard and unjust that she should be treated so like a child, and Ellen made so much of; and so she thought and thought, not attempting to do a single thing, till she actually made herself believe for the time that her kind indulgent mother had no love for her; and everything looked blacker than before.

She made no effort to rouse herself even in Mrs. Hamilton's presence, but listened to her remonstrances with such extreme carelessness, almost insolence, that her mother felt her patience failing. The self-control, however, for which she had successfully striven, enabled her so to overcome the irritation, as to retain her own quiet dignity, and simply to desire Caroline to give her attention at once to her studies and conquer her ill-temper, or not to think of accompanying them on their excursion, as idleness and peevishness were better left to themselves. An insolent and haughty reply rose to Caroline's lips; but with an effort she remained silent, her flushed forehead alone denoting the internal agitation. Emmeline's diligence and the approbation she received irritated her still more; but she rejoiced when she heard her mother tell Ellen there was not a correct line in her French exercise, and her sum, a compound long division, wrong from the very first figure. But the pleasure soon gave place to indig-

nant anger, when, instead of the reproof which she believed would follow, Mrs. Hamilton said very kindly—

“I should very much like these done correctly, Ellen, before we go out; suppose you ensconce yourself in that bay-window, there are a table and chair all ready for you, and we shall not interrupt you as we should if you remain at this table. I know they are both very difficult, to-day especially, but the more merit in their accomplishment, you know the more pleased I shall be.”

Ellen obeyed directly; a little care, and with the assistance of her grammar, which her aunt permitted her to refer to, instead of depending entirely on her memory that morning, enabled her to succeed with her French; but four times was that tormenting sum returned, till at last her tears effaced the figures as fast as they were written. Still, patience and resolution in both teacher and pupil conquered, and the fifth time there was not a figure wrong; and Mrs. Hamilton, fondly putting back the heavy ringlets which in Ellen's absorbed attention had fallen over her tearful cheeks, said, playfully—

“Shall I tell you a secret, my little Ellen? I was quite as disinclined to be firm this morning as you were to be patient; so you see we have both gained a grand victory. My conjuring propensities, as Emmy thinks them, told me that you had real cause for some little inattention, and, therefore, that it was very cruel in me to be so determined; but my *judgment* would tell me that my *feeling* was wrong, and that to conquer disinclination and overcome a difficulty, was a much better way of lessening even natural sorrow than to give up.

I do not expect you to think so just now, but I fancy you are not very sorry this disagreeable, terribly tiresome sum has not to be done to-morrow, which it must have been, had you left it to-day."

Ellen was so glad, that she felt almost happy, and her few other duties were done quite briskly, for Mrs. Hamilton had been so kind as to countermand the carriage till one, that she and Caroline might have time to finish. But Caroline, if she had not tried before, was now still less capable of doing so. Every word of kindness addressed to Ellen increased the storm raging within, and the difficulty of restraining it in Mrs. Hamilton's presence caused it to burst forth with unmitigated violence the moment she quitted the apartment, desiring Emmeline and Ellen to make haste, and put away their books, but still without taking the least notice of her. Invective, reproach, almost abuse, were poured against Ellen, who stood actually frightened at the violence she had so very innocently excited, and at the fearful and deforming passion which inflamed her cousin's every feature. Caroline's anger had miscounted time, or she must have known that her mother could not have gone far enough, for such unusual tones of excitement to escape her quick hearing. Mrs. Hamilton, startled and alarmed, returned directly, and so vividly did her child's appearance and words recall her own misguided sister in those uncontrolled fits of fury, under which she had so often trembled, that present disappointment, and dread for the future, took possession of her, and for the moment rendered her powerless. Caroline was too much engrossed to perceive her at first, and she had, therefore, time to rally from the momentary weakness.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed, fixing her eyes on Caroline, with that expression of quiet but stern reproof, which, when she did use—and it was very seldom—had the power of subduing even the wildest excitement. "What has Ellen done, that you should abuse her with this unjust and cruel and most unfeminine violence? You have indulged your ill-temper till you do not know what you say or do, and you are venting on another the anger which my displeasure has caused you to feel towards me, and towards yourself. I desire that you will control it directly, or retire to your own room, till you can behave with some degree of propriety, and not disturb the comfort and happiness of others in this most uncalled-for manner."

"I will not go," answered Caroline, bursting into violent tears, and scarcely aware of what she was saying. "I know I dislike Ellen, and I have reason to dislike her, for before she came, you were never so often displeased with me; you are always kind and indulgent to her, always treat her as a reasonable being, not as the child, the infant you think me. I know you have lost all love for me, or you must have seen I was unhappy, and spoken kindly to me, as you did to Ellen; I have every reason to dislike her, stealing your affection from me as she has, and I do with all my heart!"

"Go, and prepare for our drive, my dear children," Mrs. Hamilton said, as she calmly turned for a moment to Emmeline and Ellen, who both stood bewildered, the former from actual terror, that her sister should dare so address her mother, the latter from pain at the violent avowal of a dislike which she had intuitively felt, but had always tried to disbelieve. "The beauty of the day will

be gone if we linger much longer, and I do not intend to be disappointed of our promised ramble. Do not think anything of what this unhappy girl is saying ; at present, she scarcely knows herself, and will by-and-by wish it recalled, far more intensely than ever we can."

Emmeline longed to throw her arms round her mother, and with tears beseech her to forget what Caroline had said ; but, though Mrs. Hamilton had spoken cheerfully, and in quite her usual tone of voice to them, there was something in her countenance, that checked any display of softness even in her affectionate child ; something that almost awed her, and she left the room with Ellen to prepare for the promised excursion, which had, however, lost all its anticipated enjoyment from the uncontrolled temper of another.

"Now, Caroline, I will answer you," said Mrs. Hamilton, as soon as they were alone, and again regarding Caroline, who was sobbing violently, with that same searching look. "Your charges are such very heavy ones, that I really must request you during my absence to arrange and define them in some order. I am so perfectly ignorant of having given you any foundation for them, that, before I can attempt defence, you must inform me exactly and definitely of what you complain. That this morning my manner was kinder to Ellen than to you I quite acknowledge. Her inattention and depression had a cause, yours had none ; for if you were unhappy, it was from your own fearful temper, which by encouragement has blackened every thing around you. You may employ your time till dinner as you choose ; but at five o'clock come to me in my dressing-room, prepared to define and inform me of every charge

you can bring against me. You will consider this a command, Caroline, disregard or evasion of which will be disobedience."

She left the room, and in a very short time afterwards Caroline heard the carriage drive off; but for nearly three long hours she never moved from her seat, so utterly miserable, as scarcely even to change her position. Never in her life before, not in her most angry moments, had she so spoken to her mother, and her remorse was almost intolerable. Again and again she remembered what Mrs. Hamilton had told her so often, that, if she did not strive and pray against the dominion of ill-temper while young, it would become more and more uncontrollable, and the older she became, the more difficult to subdue, even in a moderate degree, and her words were indeed true. It had been many months since temper had gained such an ascendancy, and its effects were far, far more violent, and its power over her more determined, and if, as she grew older, it should be still worse, what would become of her? how insufferably wretched! what would she not have given to have recalled her words? The jealousy which had arisen, now she knew not how, had sunk into air before those few calm inquiring sentences from her mother, and in her excessive misery every kind deed and word and look, every fond indulgence and forbearance, in fact, all the love her mother had so lavished on her from her infancy, rushed back upon her, till she actually hated herself, and longed the more intensely for the comfort of that soothing affection, which, in real pain or childish sorrow, had never been refused her.

"Why, why did Annie tell me anything about that

hateful ball?" she exclaimed, at length, as the sound of many joyous voices and the dressing-bell proclaimed the return of the various members of her family only in time to prepare for dinner. "It was all, all from that; I know now, only from that one thought—one wish. Why was I such a fool, as not to tell Mamma at once that I knew I was to be asked, and wished so much to go?—if she had refused me, it would not have been half the pain I have made for myself. And how can I meet Papa's eye and Percy's unkind jokes with eyes like these?" she added, as, on rising to go to her own room, she caught sight of her own face in a mirror, and actually startled at the disfigurement, which the violence of her emotion had wrought. "Oh, how I wish Mamma had not desired me to go to her; that I could but hide myself from everybody—or get rid of this horrible black cloud."

From every eye but her mother's she could and did hide herself; for saying that her head ached, which was the truth, and she did not wish anything to take, she refused to go down to dinner. Mrs. Hamilton had successfully exerted herself during their excursion, and Emmeline and Ellen enjoyed themselves so thoroughly as almost to forget the alloy of the morning; and even when Caroline's message recalled it, the boys were all so merry, that it did not disturb them. Percy always declared that Caroline's headache was only another term for temper-ache, and he would certainly have sent her some message of mock pity, if his quick eye had not discovered or fancied that his mother did not look quite as well as usual, and so he contented himself by trying still more to be the life of the dinner-table. Mr.

Hamilton had seen at a single glance that all was not quite right, and Caroline's non-appearance and message explained it, to his extreme regret, for he had begun to hope and believe that his wife's extreme solicitude, on her account, was beginning to decrease.

Mrs. Hamilton had not much doubt that silence and solitude had so far had effect on Caroline as to subdue passion, and bring her to a sense of her misconduct; but that had scarcely power to lessen the anxiety and the pain which Caroline's words had so wantonly inflicted. Had she indeed evinced anything like undue partiality?—the idea alone almost brought a smile; fondly, and almost as her own child, as she loved her little niece. The very anxiety Caroline occasioned her deepened her affection; the very control she was obliged to exercise in her mode of guiding her, strengthened every feeling towards her. She was so enwrapped in these painfully engrossing thoughts, in the strict examination of her own heart, that she was not aware the time she had appointed had passed by full ten minutes, till she was roused by the handle of her door being softly turned, and left again, as if some one had wished to enter, but hesitated. The very hesitation gave her hope, for she really did not know that the utmost penalty she could have inflicted on Caroline, in the moment of natural indignation, would have failed in producing such an effect as the simple command to seek her, and define her charges against her, when that angry excitement had so calmed, that Caroline would have given worlds, if she might but have not referred to it again. She knew she dared not disobey, but her daring had left her so powerless that she had stood at

her mother's door full ten minutes before she could command courage sufficient to open it and enter.

Mrs. Hamilton looked at her changed aspect, the bitter humiliation expressed in every feature, with such pity, that it required even more than her usual exercise of control, to retain the grave and apparently unmoved tone with which she said—

“You have had a long time in which to reflect on your charges against me, Caroline. I hope they are now sufficiently defined for me to understand and answer them. You may sit down, for you do not seem very capable of standing.”

Caroline gladly obeyed, by sitting down on a low ottoman, some little distance from her mother, on whose neck she absolutely longed to throw herself and beseech forgiveness; but Mrs. Hamilton's tone was not such as to give her courage to do so. She remained silent, burying her face in her hands.

“I am waiting your pleasure, Caroline; I should have thought that you had had plenty of time to think during my absence. Of what do you accuse me?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing! Mamma, dear Mamma, do not speak to me in that tone, I cannot bear it; indeed, indeed, I am miserable enough already; condemn me to any punishment, the severest you can, I know I deserve it—but do not, do not speak so.”

“No, Caroline; were I to condemn you to any punishment, it would seem more like vengeance for the pain you have inflicted on me by your accusation of partiality and injustice, than from the hope of producing any good end. You are no longer a child, who must be taught the line of duty to a parent.—You know it

now as well as I can teach it, and if you fail, must be answerable only to yourself. I cannot help you any further, than by requesting you to explain clearly the origin of your complaint against me. Its main ground of offence is, I believe, that since Ellen has become an inmate of my family I have treated you with more harshness and unkindness than I ever did before. Can you look back on the last eighteen months and recall one instance in which this has been the case? I must have an answer, Caroline; you may now think explanation is not necessary, and that you meant nothing when you spoke, but that will not satisfy me nor you, when ill-temper regains ascendancy. You need not refrain from answering for fear of wounding me, you can scarcely do that more than you have done already."

Caroline tried to speak, but she could only sob forth, that she could not recall one instance, in which her mother had been more displeased with her than her conduct merited. Acknowledging, but almost inarticulately, that she had sometimes fancied that she had remained longer cold with her than with Ellen, after the committal of a fault—and that—(she stopped.)

"Go on, Caroline."

"I could not feel my faults such heavy ones as Ellen's."

"They are of equal, if not greater, weight than your cousin's, Caroline. You have been, from your earliest infancy, the object of the most tender and devoted care to your father and myself. Miss Harcourt has followed out our plans; you have never been exposed to any temptation, not even that of casual bad example. Ellen, till she became mine, encountered neglect, harshness,

all that could not fail in such a character to engender the faults she has. You cannot compare yourself with her, for had you been situated as she was, I fear you would have had still heavier failings."

"I should never have told untruths," exclaimed Caroline, with returning temper.

"Perhaps not, for some persons are so physically constituted that they do not know what fear is; and harshness would harden, not terrify and crush, as with such dispositions as Ellen's. But Caroline, when temper gains dominion over you, as it has done to-day, do you always think and utter nothing but the truth?"

Caroline turned from that penetrating look and burst into tears. Few as the words were, they seemed to flash light into the very inmost recesses of her heart, and tell her, that in her moments of uncontrolled temper, in her brooding fancies, she really did forfeit the truth, an adherence to which she so prided herself; and that there was no excuse for her in the idea that she did not know what she said or did—for why had religion and reason been so carefully implanted within her, but to enable her to subdue the evil temper ere it acquired such fearful dominion.

"Perhaps you have never thought of this before, Caroline," resumed Mrs. Hamilton, and her tone was not quite so cold; "but think of it in future, and it may help you to conquer yourself. Remember words can never be recalled, and that though you may have lost such command over yourself, as scarcely to know the exact sense of what you say, yet those to whom they are addressed, or those who may have only heard them must believe them, and so receive, and perhaps act on

false impressions, which no after effort will remove. Now to your next charge, that I treat Ellen as a reasonable being, and you as a child :—if you have the least foundation for this supposition, speak it without hesitation—whence has it arisen ?”

For one minute Caroline hesitated, but then resolved she would atone for her fault at least by a full confession. She told all the wishes, the hopes Annie’s information of Lady Helen’s promise had imparted, and the pain it was to feel that her mother thought her such a child as not to speak to her on the subject.

“ And if you did think so, Caroline, why did you not, from the first moment that Annie told you of it, come to me, and tell me how very much you wished it? I could not, indeed, have granted your wishes, but your confidence would have been met with such indulgence as would at least have saved you some degree of pain. Believing as I did, and as Lady Helen assured me I might with safety, that you knew nothing about it—would you have thought it kind or judicious in me, had I said, ‘ Lady Helen has persuaded me to take you to her ball, but I have refused her.’ I was silent to spare you pain, as, had you permitted yourself calmly to think, you would have believed. However, as appearances were, I grant that I have not treated you, in this instance, with the consideration that your age might perhaps have demanded; and from Annie not obeying Lady Helen’s desire, that she should not mention the subject to you, have failed in sparing you the pain of disappointment as I had hoped. But another time, instead of brooding over that which seems want of consideration on my part, come to me at once, and spare yourself and

me the pain you have caused to-day. I do not think you can accuse me of ever meeting your confidence with so much harshness as to check such openness on your part."

Caroline looked hastily up; her mother's tone was almost as fond as usual, and, unable to restrain the impulse any longer, she started from her low seat, and kneeling down close by her, clung round her, passionately exclaiming—

"Mamma! Mamma! pray forgive me; I am so very miserable—I cannot bear myself—I do not know when I shall be happy again; for even if you forgive me, I know—I know—I never can forgive myself."

"I do not wish you to forgive yourself just yet, my dear child," replied her mother, not refusing the kiss Caroline's eyes so earnestly besought. "Your fault has been such an aggravated one, that I fear it must cause you many days of remorse, the most painful kind of suffering which error can bring; but do not try to shake it off; I would rather see you endure it, and not expect happiness for a few days. You know where to seek the only source which can bring peace and comfort, and you must endeavour by earnest prayer to strengthen yourself for the conflict you have so often to encounter. You have a very difficult task, my poor child, that I know; and, therefore, do I so try to provide you with a guard and help."

"If I could but conquer it at first," answered Caroline, whose violent excitement had given way to tears of real repentance; "but at first it seems almost a pleasure to me to be cross to everybody,

and answer pettishly, and as if it were pleasanter to encourage disagreeable thoughts than to read or do anything that would remove them. And then, when I would give anything to escape from them, it seems everybody's fault but my own, and I cannot."

"If you accustomed yourself constantly to pray against this great fault, my dear child, you would find, that its very first approach would so startle you, that you would use every energy to subdue it. But I fear, Caroline, it is only when temper has made you miserable, as it has to-day, that you are quite aware of its enormity. You do not think the fault great enough to demand the watchfulness and care, without which it never will be subdued."

"I am afraid I do not indeed, Mamma. I know I do not make it a subject of prayer, as you have so often advised me, except when everything looks so black, and I am so miserable; and then, I fear, I ask more to be happy again, than for forgiveness of my sin, and for grace and strength to overcome it. I never felt this to be the case so strongly as to-day, but your coldness seems to have shown me my whole self, and I never thought I was so wicked, and so I must be miserable."

Mrs. Hamilton involuntarily drew her child more closely to her. The humility, the bitterness of self-reproach, was so unlike Caroline's usual haughtiness—so very much deeper than they had ever been before, that she hoped, in spite of her anxiety, and her voice audibly trembled as she answered—

"If you really feel this, my Caroline, you will not hesitate to follow my advice, and really pray and watch

against this unhappy temper, even when everything is so smooth and happy, that you cannot imagine why you need. Sin always gains ascendancy by using pleasure as his covering. Do not let a single cross word, or momentary unkind thought, pass unnoticed; never cease in your petition for grace and strength, but do not be content with only prayer; you must use effort as well, and if your thoughts will be black, and you feel as if you could not conquer them by yourself, nor banish them even by your favorite employments, come to me, confess them without fear or hesitation to me, and let us try if we cannot conquer them together. Will you promise me to try this plan, Caroline?"

Caroline could not reply, for every kind word her mother spoke seemed to heighten self-reproach, and make her still more wretched. Mrs. Hamilton felt that there was no refusal in her silence, and continued talking to her in that same gentle strain a little while longer, and then rose to leave her,—but Caroline looked so sorrowful, that she hesitated.

"No, Mamma; I do not deserve that you should stay with me, and so deprive Emmeline and Ellen, and the boys of their favorite hour," she said, though the tears started again to her eyes, for she felt as if it would be an indescribable comfort still to be alone with her mother. "I am too unhappy and too ashamed to join them, if I may remain away?" Mrs. Hamilton answered in the affirmative. "I have not a thing prepared for to-morrow, and—and I do not—indeed, I do not mean to give you any more trouble with my studies. I hate myself for that too."

"Do not attempt to study to-night, my dear Caroline;

get up a little earlier to-morrow, to be ready for me, if you like; but though it will be much more painful to you to remain idle the remainder of this evening than to employ yourself, even with the most disagreeable task, I would much rather you should do so. Once let temper be quite subdued, and your heart receive its necessary government, and I have no fear but that you will very quickly make up for lost time; and even if you did not, believe me, my dear child, the graces of the mind, precious as in general they are considered, and as they are, still are to me actually nothing worth, if unaccompanied by a gentle temper and womanly heart. Do not shrink from the suffering which it will be to sit alone and think on all that has passed to-day; but let your remorse be accompanied by a resolution (which you are quite capable of not only forming, but of keeping) not to rest till by prayer and effort you have sought God's blessing on your difficult task, and so feel strengthened for its fulfilment; and also for persevering in it, for you must not hope to succeed in subduing yourself all at once. Do this, and I shall be better pleased than if to-morrow morning you brought me a treble quantity of mental work."

She embraced and left her—to meditations, from whose bitter, though salutary pain, Caroline made no attempt to escape; though, had it not been for her mother's advice, she would gladly have flown to her studies and worked with double assiduity, believing that she was, by doing so, atoning for her fault, instead of merely shrinking from its remembrance. It was a trial to join her family even for prayers; for she felt so self-convicted, so humbled, that she fancied every one must despise

her ; and when, after the service, Percy approached, and with mock sympathy inquired how her headache was, and if she had recovered her appetite, and begged her not to be ill at such a critical time, as he most particularly wished to go to Lady Helen's ball, and he could not be so cruel, if she were not well, her spirit was so broken that the large tears rolled down her cheeks, and she turned away without uttering a single word.

"If you had taken the trouble to look in your sister's face, Percy, you would not have spoken so unkindly," said Mrs. Hamilton, more hastily than she was in the habit of interfering ; and as Caroline came to her, she whispered some few fond words, that enabled her to wish her father good-night and leave the room, without any farther display of emotion.

"Do you wish your sister to dislike you, Percy ?" she said, gently detaining him, as he was following Caroline.

"Dislike me, Mother ? No ! how can you think so ?"

"Because you act as if you wished it ; you never see her uncomfortable, without trying to make her more so, and is that kind ? How can she ever look up to and love you, while such is the case ?"

"I only mean it for fun, Mother. It is such glorious enjoyment to me to torment, when I see people cross and miserable for nothing."

"And in the enjoyment of your fun, my dear boy, you forget other people's feelings. I must beg you, as an especial favour to myself, that you will do all you can to soothe rather than irritate Caroline, in the short time that intervenes before you go to London. She will have a hard struggle with herself, so do not you make her trial more difficult."

"Do you wish it, Mother, dear? you know I would refrain from teasing even for a whole year, if it would please you, and give me the privilege of a kiss whenever I like," he laughingly answered, looking up in her face so archly and yet so fondly, that his mother could not help smiling; promising she would not sentence him to anything so terrible as not to tease for a whole year, as she was quite sure he would fall into his old propensities, before a quarter of the time had expired.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSPICION.—A PARTING, A DOUBLE GRIEF.—INNOCENCE
PROVED.—WRONG DONE AND EVIL CONFIRMED BY
DOUBT.

LADY HELEN's ball took place ; and Caroline had so conquered herself, that she could listen to Percy's flowing account of its delights with actual cheerfulness. It was so associated with self-reproach, that she could scarcely think of it without pain ; but she was so convinced of her folly in permitting such a very little thing so to affect her temper as to cause all the misery she had endured, that she had resolved to punish herself, not only by listening to Percy, but by herself inquiring the details. She was a girl of really a strong mind, and once convinced of error, once released from the fell dominion of temper, she did not care what pain she endured, or what difficulty she encountered, so that she could but convince her mother how truly she regretted, and tried to atone for past misconduct. It was very easy, as Mrs. Hamilton had told her, to regain lost time in her studies, but not quite so easy to check the cross word or unkind thought, and to break from the black cloud that still at times would envelop her. But she did not give way, constantly even making opportunities for self-denial, and doing little kindnesses for Ellen, though she was too truthful to profess an affection which as yet she could not feel.

Early in the following week Mr. Grahame came over to Oakwood with a petition. Annie having taken cold at the party, had been obliged to enact the invalid much against her inclination, and so entreated her mother to invite Caroline to spend a few days with her; and, to her astonishment, her cold harsh father volunteered to go himself for her. Mr. Hamilton at once acceded; his wife hesitated; but she went at once to Caroline, who chanced to be reading alone in the schoolroom, for it was the time of recreation, and told her. For a moment her countenance was actually radiant with delight, the next it clouded over.

"You would like it very much, but you are afraid I shall not permit you to go; is that the meaning of your change of countenance?" asked her mother, half smiling.

"I feel afraid of myself, Mamma; for I fear I am always more ill-tempered and proud after any such pleasure as going to Moorlands would be."

"Would you rather not go, then?"

"I cannot say quite that, Mamma; I should like it very much, if I could but be sure of myself afterwards."

"Did you ever feel such a doubt of yourself before, Caroline, when going to stay with Annie?"

"No, Mamma; I seem to have thought a great deal more the last few days, and not to feel half so sure of myself."

"Then I think there is less danger for you, that is, of course, if you are willing to risk the temptation of Lady Helen's too kind consideration and lavish praises, which make mine so very tame."

"Oh, Mamma, pray do not say so," interrupted Caro-

line very eagerly. "Indeed, I would rather hear you speak and see you smile as you do now, than listen to all that Lady Helen is so kind as to say. I know I did like it very much, and that it did sometimes make me fancy when I came home, that you were almost cold. But indeed, indeed, I hope I am learning to know you better."

"I hope so too, dearest. But Mr. Grahame is waiting for you; and, by-the-by, begged me to ask you for some lines you promised to copy out for a print in Lady Helen's album. You may do just as you like about going, because you are quite old and wise enough to decide for yourself. Ill-temper always brings such suffering with it, that if pleasure must recall it, you will be wiser not to go; but if you can resist it, if you think you can return to your quiet daily routine as forbearing and gentle and happy as you are now, go, my love, and enjoy yourself as much as you can."

"I will try and remember all you said about prayer, when we think we are most secure, dear Mamma," answered Caroline, in a very earnest and somewhat lowered voice. "I know, whenever I have been to Moorlands before, I have felt so elated, so sure I should never be in an ill temper, so proud from being made so much of, that I fear I have very often relaxed even in my daily prayers, and never thought it necessary to pray against ill-temper. Do you think if I watch myself, and still pray against it, it will save me from being cross and unkind on my return?"

"It will undoubtedly help you, my dear child, very considerably, and render your trial very much easier, but I cannot promise you that it will entirely prevent the *inclination* to feel pettish and unhappy. I have no

doubt that in time it will prevent even that ; but now, you know, it is very early days, and you have not yet forgotten the bitter pain of last week ; still I think you may venture to go, love, and if I do see you happy and gentle on your return, it will do much towards convincing me you are striving in earnest. Make haste, and get ready, and do not forget the poem. I will send over your things. Tell Lady Helen I shall expect all her family next Monday evening, to join Edward's little farewell-party, and you can return with them."

With the most delighted alacrity Caroline hastened to get ready, and in her hurry forgot the poem till she re-entered the schoolroom, which was still untenanted.

"What shall I do for some writing paper?" she thought ; "the desks are all put away, and it will detain me so long to go up again for my keys, and the volume is too large to carry—oh, I will tear out a blank page from this book, it will not be very elegant, but I can recopy it at Moorlands."

And she hastily tore out a page from an exercise-book which lay open on the table ; not perceiving that by doing so a fellow-leaf, which was written on, was loosened, and fell to the ground, mingling with some torn papers which had been put in a heap to be cleared away. She had just finished it, when Fanny came to tell her Mr. Grahame could not wait any longer, and asking if all the papers on the ground were to be removed, Caroline hastily answered in the affirmative, without looking at them, and the girl bore them off, in her apron, the written leaf among them.

Now it so happened that this written leaf had already occasioned trouble. Miss Harcourt had been so dis-

pleased with Ellen's careless performance of a French exercise that morning, that she had desired her to write it again. It was very difficult, and had materially shortened the time which she had promised to devote to Edward, who was this week released from his attendance on Mr. Howard, to permit him and Ellen to be as much together as possible. Hurried by him, she left her book open on the table to dry, and, finding it closed on her return, put it away, without looking at it. The following day Miss Harcourt, of course, requested to see it, and, to Ellen's utter astonishment, her exercise was not there; only the faulty and blotted theme, with no sign to explain its disappearance. Now we know Miss Harcourt was rather prejudiced against Ellen, and, as she had unhappily failed in truth more than once—perhaps she was not so unjust and harsh as poor Ellen felt her to be—she refused to believe her assurance that she had written it. No one had been in the schoolroom at the time to whom she could refer; if Ellen had never disobeyed or deceived, of course her word would be sufficient, as her brother's and cousins' would.

“That you have failed again, both in obedience and truth, Ellen, I cannot for a moment doubt, and it certainly would be my duty to inform your aunt directly; but as I know it would cause her real suffering to be compelled to punish you just this last week that Edward will be with us for some time, I shall say nothing about it to her, nor inflict any penalty on you to attract her notice, but it is entirely for her sake I forbear. One so hardened in falsehood as you must be, so soon to forget her kind indulgence after your fault, only a few weeks ago, can deserve nothing but harshness and con-

tempt. I shall certainly, after this week, warn her not to trust too implicitly in your artful professions of repentance."

Poor Ellen felt too bewildered and too miserable even to cry. That she had written her exercise, she was as positive as that she had been told to do so; but if she had—what had become of it? Harsh as Miss Harcourt seemed, appearances were certainly very much against her. She had not a single proof that she had obeyed, and her word was nothing; even Emmeline looked at her doubtingly, and as if she could scarcely even pity her. It was very little comfort to think her aunt was not to be told. Her own impulse was to go to her, and tell her at once; but how could she be believed? and Mrs. Hamilton's words "If I ever discover another untruth, you will compel me to adopt still severer measures, pain as it will be to myself," the remembrance of all she had suffered, the disappointment it would be to her aunt, to think all she had said and read to her were forgotten, when in reality she was constantly thinking of and trying to act on them, all checked the impulse, and terrified her into silence.

Miss Harcourt was not an acute physiognomist; she could only read in Ellen's face hardihood and recklessness. We rather think Mrs. Hamilton would have read something very different; but she was very much engaged with Edward, and if she did think Ellen looked much more out of spirits, she attributed it to natural feeling at the rapid approach of the day of separation. For her brother's sake, to prove to him she could enter into his joy, she tried very hard not to evince the least symptom of depression, and never to cry before him at

least, though every night, that told her another day had gone, and brought before her all sorts of vague feelings and fancies of dread, she either cried herself to sleep, or laid awake, still more unhappy. The suspicion attached to her seemed to double the severity of the trial of parting. Edward was her own; Edward must love her, with all her faults; but even her aunt, her dear, kind, good aunt, must cease to have any affection for her, if so constantly believed guilty of a sin so terrible as falsehood. And she seemed to love her brother still more than ever, every day that brought the hour of parting nearer—sometimes as if she *could not* bear the pain of not being able to look at his bright face and listen to his glad laugh and dear voice for three, perhaps six long years. Her aunt's gentle kindness seemed to increase her unhappiness, for though she knew she was innocent, still she felt, if Miss Harcourt had told Mrs. Hamilton, she could not be so caressed and cared for, and she was receiving that which she was believed to have forfeited. Miss Harcourt's face certainly seemed to ask her as distinctly as words, how she could be so artful, so deceitful as to permit her aunt to take such notice of her; and so she often shrunk away, when she most longed to sit by and listen to her.

Edward's spirits never sobered, except now and then, when he thought of leaving Mrs. Hamilton, to whom he had given the same love he had lavished on his mother, perhaps to a still greater extent, for reverence was largely mingled with it. Mr. Howard, too, was another whom he grieved to leave, and Mrs. Hamilton so trusted in these apparently strong affections and his good disposition, as to feel but little anxiety; merely sorrow that

she was to lose him for a profession of danger. She did not know, nor did Mr. Howard, nor Edward himself, that he was one who would be guided more by the influence of those with whom he was intimately thrown, than by any memory of the absent, or judgment of his own.

Ellen's manner on the Monday evening annoyed and prejudiced Miss Harcourt still more; Mrs. Greville and Mary, Lady Helen and all her family, bringing Caroline home with them, Mr. Howard, and some of Edward's favorite companions, all assembled at Oakwood, and every one was determined to be gay and cheerful, and Edward's voice was the merriest, and his laugh the happiest there; and Ellen, though her head ached with the effort and the constant struggle of the preceding week, was quite cheerful too, and talked to Mary Greville, and Lilla and Cecil Grahame, and even to Mr. Howard, as Miss Harcourt felt she had no right to do; and as must prove her to be that which she had always fancied her. Mrs. Hamilton, on the contrary, saw that in the very midst of a laugh or of speaking her niece's eye would rest on Edward, and the lip quite quiver, and her smile become for the moment so strained, that she was satisfied Ellen's cheerfulness proceeded from no want of feeling; she wondered indeed at so much control at such an early age, but she loved her for it notwithstanding. Once only Ellen was nearly conquered. Mary had begged her to sing a little Hindoo air, of which she was particularly fond, and Edward, hearing the request, said, eagerly—

“Do sing it, dear Ellen; I am quite as fond of it as Mary is, for it seems to make me think of India and

poor Mamma, and it will be such a long time before I hear it again."

She had never in her whole life felt so disinclined to sing, so as if it were quite impossible; as if she must cry, if she did; but Edward would think it so unkind if she refused, for she did not know herself why his very words should have increased the difficulty, and what reason could she give him? Mary went, and asked Mrs. Hamilton to accompany her; and Ellen did her very best, but her voice would tremble, and just before the end of the second verse it failed entirely; but still she was glad she had tried, for on Mrs. Hamilton saying, very kindly, and in a voice that only she and Mary could hear, "I was half afraid you would not succeed to-night, my dear Ellen; but you were quite right to try,"—Mary seemed to understand at once why it had been so difficult for her, to oblige her, and to be quite sorry she had pressed it so much, and Edward had thanked her, and told her he should sing it in idea very often. She tried to be merry again, but she could not succeed as before, and so she kept as near her aunt as she could all the remainder of the evening, as if she were only safe there.

Edward, too, had a hard battle with himself, as one by one his favorite companions took leave of him with a hearty shake of the hand, and eager—but in some half-choked wishes for his health and prosperity; and when all had gone, and Mr. Howard, who had remained for prayers, took him in his arms, and solemnly prayed God to bless him, and save him from danger and temptation, and permit him to return to his family, improved in all things that would make him an affectionate guardian to

his orphan sister, and repay all the love and care of his aunt and uncle, it was a desperate effort that prevented him from sobbing like a child; but he had his midshipman's uniform on for the first time, and he was quite resolved he would not disgrace it; therefore he only returned Mr. Howard's embrace very warmly, and ran out of the room. But when his aunt went into his room an hour afterwards, it appeared as if he had put off his pride and his uniform together, for, though he was fast asleep, his pillow was quite wet with tears.

The next morning was a very sad one, though Percy and his father did all they could to make it cheerful—(we ought to have said before that Percy and Herbert were both going with Mr. Hamilton and Edward.) No one liked the idea of losing Edward for so long a time. He had made himself a favorite with all, even with every one of the servants, who, when the carriage was ready at eleven o'clock, thronged into the hall to take a last look at him. He was so altered, that he had that morning, actually of his own accord, shaken hands with every one of them who had ever done anything for him, especially Ellis and Morris, and Robert, to whom he had given a very handsome present, and thanked him for all his attention.

He kept up very manfully till he came to his aunt, whose emotion, as she held him in a close embrace, was so unusually visible, and for the moment he seemed so to love her, that the idea of the sea lost half its delight, and he felt as if he could almost have liked to remain with her. But Percy's joyous voice—

"Come, master Edward, I thought you were a sailor, not a schoolboy. Off with you; you will not give me

time or room for one kiss from Mamma before we go," roused him, and he tried to laugh in the midst of his tears, gave Ellen another kiss, and ran into the carriage, where he was quickly followed by his uncle and cousins, and in a very few minutes Oakwood, dear, happy Oakwood, as his whole heart felt it at that moment, was hidden from his sight.

Ellen remained by the window looking after the carriage, long after it was impossible to see or hear it, very pale, and her eyes very heavy, but not in tears; and as her aunt went to her, and put her arm round her, and began talking to her very cheerfully of all Edward would have to write to her about, and how soon they might hear from him, and that Ellen should answer him as often and as fully as she liked, and that she would not even ask to see her letters to him, or all his to her, as they might have many little affectionate things to say to each other, that they might not care about any one else seeing, and she would trust them both—Ellen seemed as if one pain was soothed, and if indeed she heard often from him, she might bear his departure. But there was still the other source of unhappiness, recalled every time she met Miss Harcourt's cold suspicious look, which had not changed even then. Still she tried to join her cousins, and get her work, for there were no studies that morning, and so some little time passed, by Mrs. Hamilton's exertions, almost cheerfully; but then Ellen left the room to get something she wanted, and, in seeking her own, passed Edward's room, the door of which stood half open. She could not resist entering, and everything spoke of him so vividly, and yet seemed so to tell her he had gone, really gone, and she was

quite alone, that all the pain came back again worse than ever, and she laid her head on his pillow, and her long checked tears flowed with almost passionate violence.

"My dear Ellen, I have been looking for you everywhere," said her aunt's kind voice, full an hour afterwards; "Emmeline went into your room and could not find you, and I could not imagine what had become of you. It was not wise of you to come here just this morning, love. You have been so brave, so unselfish all this week, that I must not let you give way now. Try and think only that Edward will be happier as a sailor than he would be remaining with you; and though I know you must miss him very, very painfully, you will be able to bear it better. Poor Alice Seaton, of whom you have heard me speak, has no such comfort; her brother could not bear the idea of a sea life, and is scarcely strong enough for it, and yet, poor fellow, it is the only opening his uncle has for him, and his poor sister has not only that pain to bear—for you can fancy how dreadful it would be, if Edward had left us for a life in which he thought he should be miserable—but is obliged to leave the aunt she loves, as much, I think, as you love me, Ellen, and go as a teacher in a school, to bear her accumulated sorrow quite alone. Sad as your trial is, you have still many things to bless God for, dearest, as I am sure you will acknowledge, if, when the pain of the present moment has subsided, you think of Alice, and try to put yourself in her place."

"It is not only parting from Edward," answered Ellen, trying to check her tears, but clasping her arms still closer round her aunt, as if dreading that her own words should send her from her.

"Not only parting from Edward, Ellen, love! what is it then? tell me," replied Mrs. Hamilton, surprised and almost alarmed. But Ellen could not go on, much as she wished it, for her momentary courage had deserted her, and she could only cry more bitterly than before. "Have you done anything wrong, Ellen? and have you forgotten my promise?" inquired her aunt, after waiting several minutes, and speaking very sorrowfully.

"Miss Harcourt thinks I have, Aunt; but indeed, indeed I have not; I have not been so very wicked as to tell another falsehood. I know no one can believe me, but I would rather you should know it, even if—if you punish me again."

"You must try to be more calm, my dear Ellen, and tell me clearly what is causing you so much additional suffering; for I cannot quite understand you. I certainly shall not punish you, unless *quite* convinced you have failed in truth again, which I do not think you have. Tell me exactly what it is, and look at me while you are speaking."

Ellen tried to obey, but her grief had gained such an ascendancy, that it was very difficult. Mrs. Hamilton looked very thoughtful when she ceased, for she really was more perplexed than she allowed Ellen to perceive; and the poor child, fancying her silence could only mean disbelief and condemnation, remained quiet and trembling by her side.

"I promised you that I would not doubt you, Ellen, and I will not now, though appearances are so strong against you," she said, after several minutes' thought. "Come with me to the schoolroom, and show me your exer-

cise-book ; I may find some clue to explain this mystery.” —Ellen thought that was quite impossible, but inexpressibly comforted by her aunt’s trust, she went with her directly

“Ellen has been telling me that you have been very much displeased with her, my dear Lucy,” Mrs. Hamilton said, directly she entered, addressing Miss Harcourt, who was sitting reading with Caroline and Emmeline, “and certainly with great apparent justice ; but she is so unhappy about it, that I can scarcely believe that she has forgotten all which passed between us a short time ago, and I am going therefore, with your permission, to try if I cannot discover something that may throw a light on the subject.”

“I am afraid that will scarcely be possible,” replied Miss Harcourt ; “however, I am glad she has had the candour to tell you, instead of continuing to receive your notice as she has done the last week.” Ellen had brought her book while Miss Harcourt was speaking, and Mrs. Hamilton attentively examined it.

“Did you not begin one like this the same day, Caroline?”

“Yes, Mamma ; don’t you remember we were obliged to send to Harris for them ? as the parcel with the stationery did not come from Exeter as soon as we expected. And we noticed how much thinner they were, though they were the same sized books.”

“And did I not hear you say something about their having the same number of leaves, and therefore it must have been only the quality of the paper which made the difference ?”

"What a memory you have, Mamma," answered Caroline, smiling. "I did not think you were taking the least notice of us, but I do remember saying so now, and indeed, I very often wish the quality had been the same, for our writing looks horrid."

"Do you happen to remember the number of leaves they contained, and if they were both alike?"

"I know they had both the same number, and I think it was two and twenty, but I can tell you in a moment." And with her usual quickness of movement, Caroline unlocked her desk, drew forth her book, and ran over the leaves.

"I am right, two and twenty."

"And you are quite sure they had both the same number?"

"Perfectly certain, Mamma."

"Then, by some incomprehensible means, two leaves have vanished from Ellen's—here are only twenty. Have you ever torn a leaf out, Ellen?"

"No, Aunt, indeed I have not."

"When did Miss Harcourt tell you to write this missing exercise?"

"Last Monday week—I mean yesterday week."

"Where did you write it, and what did you do with your book afterwards?"

"I wrote it at this table, Aunt: I was so sorry I had to do it, when Edward depended so much on my going out with him, that I thought it would save time not to get my desk; and as soon as it was done, I left it open to dry. When I came home it was closed, and I put it away without looking at it, and the next morning the exercise was not there."

"Who was in this room after you left it? by-the-by, it was the morning you went to Lady Helen's, Caroline; did you notice Ellen's book open as she said? Why, what is the matter, my dear?" she added, observing that Caroline looked as if some sudden light had flashed upon her, and then, really grieved.

"I am so very, *very* sorry, Mamma; I do believe it has been all my haste and carelessness that has caused Ellen all this unhappiness. I was in such a hurry to copy the poem for Lady Helen, that I tore a blank leaf out of an open book on the table, without thinking whose it was. In my haste the book fell to the ground, I picked it up to write on it, but never noticed if the fellow-leaf fell out, which it must have done, and no doubt Fanny carried it away with some other torn papers, which she asked me if she were to destroy. I am more sorry than I can tell you, Ellen; pray believe that I did not do it purposely."

"I am sure she will, if it be only for the comfort of our knowing the truth," said Mrs. Hamilton, truly relieved, not only from the explanation, but perceiving Caroline's voluntarily offered kiss was willingly and heartily returned by Ellen. It was almost the first she had ever seen exchanged between them.

"I must believe you, dear Caroline, for you never say what you do not mean," said Ellen, earnestly; "but I do so wish Miss Harcourt could see my exercise; she would quite believe me then."

"And we should all be more satisfied," replied Mrs. Hamilton, perceiving in a moment that Miss Harcourt still doubted, and ringing the bell, she desired the footman to send Fanny to her.

"Do you remember taking some torn papers from this room, the morning you went to tell Miss Hamilton that Mr. Grahame was waiting?" she asked.

"Yes, Madam."

"And were they all torn up in small pieces?"

"No, Madam; there was one like the page out of a book, which made me ask Miss Hamilton if they were all to be destroyed. It was such a nice clean piece, only being written on one side, that I wrapped up some lace in it—Mrs. Ellis having only half an hour before scolded me for not keeping it more carefully."

"Bring me the leaf, my good girl, and Miss Ellen will give you a still better piece for the purpose," replied her mistress, quite unable to suppress a smile, and Ellen hastily took out a large sheet of writing paper, and the moment Fanny returned (she seemed gone an age) gave it to her, and seized her own, which she placed in her aunt's hand, without being able to speak a single word.

"I think that is the very theme, and certainly Ellen's writing, my dear Lucy; we can have no more doubt now," said Mrs. Hamilton, the moment Fanny had left the room, delighted with the exchange, and drawing Ellen close to her, for the poor child could really scarcely stand.

"I have done you injustice, Ellen, and I beg your pardon," replied Miss Harcourt directly, and Mrs. Hamilton would have been better pleased had she stopped there, but she could not help adding, "you know I should never have doubted you if you had not so often forfeited truth."

Ellen's first impulse had been to go to her, but her

last words caused her to bury her face on her aunt's shoulder.

"I really think, Ellen, you ought to thank Ellis for giving Fanny a scolding, as it has done you such excellent service," resumed Mrs. Hamilton, playfully; "and what fee are you going to give me for taking upon myself to prove your innocence in open court? I think myself so very clever, that I shall tell Percy I am a better lawyer without study, than he can hope to be with. You don't seem very capable of doing anything but kissing me now, and so I will not be very exacting. You have cried yourself almost ill, and so must bear the penalty. Go and lie down in my dressing-room for an hour or two: Emmeline, go with your cousin, and see what a kind affectionate nurse you can be till I come. It is never too early to practise such a complete woman's office."

Emmeline, quite proud of the charge, and more grieved than she very well knew how to express, till she was quite alone with Ellen, that she, too, had suspected and been cold to her the last week, left the room with her cousin. Caroline seemed to hesitate a moment, but she was quite certain by her mother's face that she wished to speak to Miss Harcourt, and so, without being told, took up her book, and went into the library.

"And now, Lucy, I am going to ask you a personal favour," began Mrs. Hamilton, the moment they were alone.

"That I will try and not judge Ellen so harshly again," was her instant reply; "you have every right to *desire* it, my dear friend, not to ask it as a favour; I *was* too prejudiced and too hasty; but your own dear

children are so truthful, so open, that I fear they have quite spoiled me for the necessary patience and forbearance with others."

"You have not quite guessed it, Lucy. Appearances were so very strongly against that poor child, that I am not at all astonished you should have disbelieved her assertion. In the moment of irritation, it is not unlikely I should have done so myself; but the favour I am going to ask you, is merely that you will try and *never show* that you doubt her word, or refer to her past failures. I am quite convinced that untruth is not Ellen's natural disposition, but that it has been caused by the same circumstances which have made her such a painfully timid, too humble, character. If with all her efforts to conquer herself, she still finds her word doubted, and the past brought forward, she never will be able to succeed. Examine as strictly and carefully as you please, and as I am sure she will desire, if necessary—as she did to-day—but oblige me, and *never doubt her*. If she finds we never do, it will raise her self-esteem, and give her a still further incentive to adhere as strictly to the truth, as she sees we believe she does. I am certain the habit of falsehood has often been strengthened by the injudicious and cruel references to one or two childish failures. If I am never to be believed, what is the use of trying to tell the truth? is the very natural question, and the present pain of carefulness being greater than the visible amount of evil, the habit is confirmed. Will you oblige me?"

"Of course I will, dearest Mrs. Hamilton; how can you talk so! Have you not a right to desire what you think proper, in my guidance of your children, instead of so appealing to me as an equal?"

"And are you not? My dear Lucy, have I ever in act or word considered you otherwise? In the very intrusting my children to your care, do I not prove that I must think you so? Have you lived with me all these years, and not yet discovered that I have some few notions peculiar perhaps to myself, but that one amongst them is, that we can never consider too much, or be too grateful to those invaluable friends who help us in the training of our children?"

"I have lived long enough with you to know that there never was, never can be, any woman like you, either as wife, mother, mistress, or friend?" exclaimed Miss Harcourt, with most unusual fervour.

"You did not know your own mother, dearest Lucy, as how I wish you had, or you would not think so. Every firm, truthful, estimable quality I may possess, under God's blessing, I owe to her. As a young child before she came to me, and some years afterwards, I was more like Ellen than either of my own darlings; and that perhaps explains the secret of my love for, and forbearance with her."

"Like Ellen!" repeated Miss Harcourt, much surprised; "forgive me, but, indeed, I can scarcely believe it."

"It is truth, notwithstanding; my poor father's great preference for Eleanor, when we were children, her very superior beauty and quickness, threw me back into myself; and I am quite certain if it had not been for your excellent mother, who came to live with us when I was only seven, my character would have suffered as much from neglect on the one side, and too painful humility on my own, as Ellen's has done. I can understand her feelings of loneliness, misappreciation,

shrinking into herself, better even than she does herself."

"But your affection and kindness ought to have altered her character by this time."

"Hardly—eighteen months is not long enough to remove the painful impressions and influences of eleven sorrowful years. Besides, I scarcely know all these influences; I fear sometimes that she has endured more than I am aware of. So you must think charitably of my fancy, dearest Lucy," she added, smiling, "and help me to make Ellen as much like me as a woman, as I believe she is to me as a child; and to do so, try and think a little, a very little, more kindly and hopefully of her than you do."

"I really do wish you were not quite so penetrating, dearest Mrs. Hamilton; there is no hiding a single feeling or fancy from you," answered Miss Harcourt, slightly confused, but laughing at the same time. "What with your memory, and your quick observation, and your determined notice of little things, you really are a most dangerous person to live with; and if you were not more kind, and indulgent, and true than anybody else, we should all be frightened to come near you."

"I am glad I have some saving qualities," replied Mrs. Hamilton, laughing also; "it would be rather hard to be isolated because I can read other people's thoughts. However, we have entered into a compact," she continued, rather more seriously; "you will never show that you doubt Ellen, and in any difficult matter, come at once to me," and Miss Harcourt willingly assented.

The day passed much more happily than the morning could have anticipated. Emmeline's nursing was so affectionate and successful, that Ellen was quite able to join them at dinner, and her aunt had selected such a very interesting story to read aloud, in which one character was a young sailor, that the hours seemed to fly; and then they had a long talk about poor Alice Seaton and her brother, whether it would be possible for Mr. Hamilton to place young Seaton in some situation that he liked better, and that his health was more fitted for. Ellen said, she should like to see and know Alice so much, for her trial must be such a very hard one, that her aunt promised her she should in the Midsummer holidays, for Alice should then come and spend a week with them. It seemed as if not to be able to wish Edward good night, and kiss him, brought back some of the pain again; but she found, that thinking about poor Alice, and fancying how miserable she must be, if she loved her aunt as dearly as she did Mrs. Hamilton, to be obliged to part from her as well as her brother, and live at a school, made her pain seem less absorbing; as if to help Alice would do more towards curing it than anything. And though of course every day, for a little while, she seemed to miss Edward more and more, still her aunt's affection and her own efforts, prepared her to see her uncle and cousins return, and listen to all they could tell her about him without any increase of pain.

